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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

17th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 September 2016, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Balé (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nishani: It is a special pleasure for me, in my capacity of Head of State of the Republic of Albania, to address the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

At the outset, I wish to greet, and hail the election of, the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson, and to wish him good luck and every success in fulfilling the agenda and the ambitious commitments undertaken.

Above and beyond the honour and privilege of addressing the Assembly, I also feel a specific responsibility to provide a modest contribution, especially during this important time of regional and global developments, when our attention has been focused on ensuring sustainable development.

I would like to express deep appreciation for the substantial vision and role of the Secretary-General and his contribution at the helm of the United Nations by drawing our attention to fundamental issues associated with values and human dignity and to issues related to peace and security on our common planet.

This year Albania celebrated the sixty-first anniversary of its membership in the United Nations, and it is with legitimate pleasure that I emphasize that my country remains faithful to the principles of the United Nations Charter and makes a maximal contribution, using all of its potential and capacities, to ensure peace and safety and to improve human rights.

I take this opportunity to assure the Assembly that my country has the necessary sensitivity to the challenges facing the world today and that it supports all common efforts to address them, with an unwavering conviction that conflict prevention and ensuring global peace and security, with a focus on the attention paid to people and to human society, require close cooperation and coordination.

In addressing these challenges, Albania is inclusively and comprehensively engaged in crisis prevention. Its engagement is focused on humanitarian aid; its contribution to regional stability and security; sustainable development; ratification of the Paris Agreement and the depositing of the instruments of ratification with the Secretary-General; the

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implementation of all of its commitments in the field of security and its appreciated and assessed contribution at the regional and international levels; and playing a proactive role on international platforms for the promotion and advancement of human rights.

Albania also views the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an international platform for strengthening the connection between development and security, in the belief that the Agenda will serve as a guide for our action aimed at sustainable development over the next 15 years for peoples, the planet, peace, partnership and prosperity.

Albania is a pilot country in designing the global indicators for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16, for peace, justice and strong and consolidated institutions. I take this opportunity to announce that Albania is determined to be active at the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, which offers a unique opportunity for the adoption of a new urban global agenda to strengthen relationships and synergies among urbanization and sustainable development and climate change.

The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement are rightly considered to be opportunities to create a better life for present and future generations. The implementation of these two international documents, in the context of which Albania is working proactively, is rightly considered a key global strategy for coping with climate change, achieving sustainable development and addressing international assistance and peacemaking and peacebuilding issues.

Albania was among those countries that quickly ratified the Paris Agreement, with the sole aim of contributing to the acceleration of its entry into effect and becoming active as soon as possible.

In May, I welcomed and attended the first Global Humanitarian Summit, organized and held under the auspices of the Secretary-General in Istanbul. I would note in particular Albania's support for the Agenda for Humanity and the view that a shift from perpetual crisis management to effective management in the area of prevention and early action is urgently needed. I am convinced that this Agenda will help us to translate the initiative into action for the good of humankind and generations to come.

Albania is joining in the international community's efforts to deal with migration and refugee flows in a consistent and coordinated manner. Today, realities on the ground and at the policy level are leading, even forcing, us to change our approach at the regional level and beyond, in order to take qualitative steps forward in our work, approach and cooperation on migration.

Albania, as a European Union candidate country and in anticipation of the opening of accession negotiations, has embraced all of the positions and commitments of the European Union whenever required and necessary. Even within the framework of the Agenda for Humanity, Albania has joined the European Union positions and will contribute with all of its potential and capabilities to meeting those commitments.

I take this opportunity to compliment once again the Secretary-General on the report published earlier this year entitled "One humanity: shared responsibility" (A/70/709), as well as to reaffirm the support of my country for the basic principles set out in that report. It offers us a complete picture of the sad reality of human society, the humanitarian situation and human rights around the world.

Another fundamental challenge to the common values of human society is the fight against international terrorism and violent extremism. A few days ago, the citizens of New York, the city in which we have gathered today, and all other American citizens felt the pain and grief of commemorating the victims of the terrorist attacks that took place 15 years ago.

Terrorist attacks, especially those with religious motivations, have intensified in recent years, striking with ferocity and savagery at the major cities of France, Belgium, Turkey, Kuwait, Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon and many other countries across the world, aiming to intimidate our societies and bring them to their knees.

In this context, Albania appreciates the pivotal role played by the United Nations in the global fight against terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism, as we consider the Organization as a key actor. Albania also supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and the active role of the United Nations in finding political solutions and addressing the root causes of conflict in areas so affected.

Albania reaffirms its support for Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2253 (2015),

which require States to take the measures necessary to ensure respect for and the upholding of human rights, as well as address the issue of so-called foreign fighters and the financing of international terrorism. At present, Albania is enlisted in and, like other proactive countries, is committed to fully implementing the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Given our experience of many centuries of peaceful, harmonious religious coexistence, as well as the need to address this challenge domestically, Albania is implementing a pilot programme for preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism through education, with the ambition of turning that programme into a platform of dimensions wider than a purely domestic one. Albania is ready to share its experience with other countries and peoples.

Given the policies that it has pursued over the past two decades, Albania has become increasingly active in contributing to security issues in the international arena. My country has ensured its role and is strengthening that role through its proactive membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, its clear support for and concrete commitment to the implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy mechanisms of the European Union, and its support for and participation in United Nations operations and in the policy advisory assistance missions carried out in Afghanistan and Sudan. Furthermore, Albania has strengthened its role through participating in missions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, improving its strategic partnership with the United States and the European Union and engaging seriously in the fight against terrorism and combating threats to peace and security in the world. Since September 1996, Albania has contributed 6,528 troops to international peacekeeping operations.

Albania believes that the peace process in the Middle East can be maintained through negotiations and that the parties involved should take advantage of the energy and attention provided by the international community actors towards a final and lasting solution of this issue.

Albania also confirms its support for the efforts of the United Nations to facilitate a peace process in Syria, and it hailed the engagements aimed at establishing peace in Syria, opening and securing the humanitarian aid and assistance routes, and fighting Da'esh and Al-Nusra with determination. But the developments that have unfolded in recent days and hours are very worrying. The attacks on and interruption of humanitarian aid convoys to the civilian population undermine the efforts to reach an armistice and put an end to the violence.

Albania has recently followed with concern the nuclear tests carried out in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and has condemned them as open, systematic and provocative acts in violation of the resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations. Those acts affect peace and security in North-East Asia, as well as worldwide, and Albania therefore demands that that country comply with and enforce international law and the United Nations resolutions.

Albania devotes special attention to regional cooperation in its entirety. Our foreign policy is maximally oriented towards the strengthening of good-neighbourly relations with all of the countries of the region and their full-fledged integration into Euro-Atlantic processes. The energetic engagement of Albania in that context and its active and constructive role in all regional initiatives have helped to strengthen political, economic and human development among all partner countries in the region, with the goal of establishing an integration agenda among those countries, the European Union and the Western Balkan countries as part of a common journey of regional countries towards European Union membership.

Albania supports Kosovo's participation in all multilateral, regional and international activities, based on the fundamental principle that all countries in the region should actively participate in and contribute to the process of regional cooperation. Kosovo has made extraordinary achievements in consolidating its democratic institutions, good governance, the multi-ethnic coexistence of religions and, in particular, progress in the Euro-Atlantic processes. The independence of Kosovo has served to strengthen peace, stability and security and has inspired reconciliation in the region. In that spirit, we support and encourage — with no hesitation — progress in the ongoing dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, which is being mediated and facilitated by the European Union and supported by the United States. We consider those talks to be a very suitable platform for ironing out all of the outstanding issues so that they can set their sights towards the future.

Albania will continue to strongly support the expansion of the international recognition of Kosovo

and of the active role that it can play as a fully fledged member in all regional organizations, just as we support the inexorable process of its membership in international organizations. That process supports inclusive international policies and Kosovo's contribution to global policies, and also strengthens peace, security and development in the Balkan region. Today, Kosovo is recognized by 109 United Nations Member States, and I am convinced that soon other Members of the Organization will recognize it, contributing to the further strengthening of peace and stability in the region of South-East Europe and beyond.

Albania is fully committed to the process of European integration, and we consider the prospect of European Union membership as an indispensable stimulus for far-reaching reforms in the interest of strengthening the rule of law and achieving sustainable development in my country. The European Union is facing severe challenges, especially after Brexit, but Albania is determined to pursue the path of reforms, considering European integration its major objective and its best — and only — alternative.

In conclusion, I would like to confirm once again the determination of Albania to continue its support for the United Nations agenda, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to ensure sustainable development in all countries. We also support efforts to further strengthen and enhance the role of the Organization on the global level.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Condé (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to begin by congratulating Mr. Thomson on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at this session, and I would like to assure the President that he will haveour complete support for a successful session. It is also my pleasure to pay a well-deserved tribute to the previous President, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for the transparent and dynamic approach with which he led the activities of the General Assembly during its seventieth session.

On 25 September 2015, in this Hall, the leaders of the world put together their vision for the world for the period up to 2030 by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. At the heart of that Agenda lies an ambition for the international community to work tirelessly to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions so to create inclusive, fair and prosperous societies that are respectful of the environment and human rights. Such an ambition clearly initiates a shift in the paradigm for development, which is rendered necessary not only by the multiple challenges that face humankind, but also by irreversible relationships of interdependence.

A review of the world in which we live today does not inspire great optimism. The gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow. The number of massive population displacements is also on the rise. Various crises and conflicts emerge and sometimes persist, making our planet ever more vulnerable to climate change. Such developments are alarming, and they require a global, integrated, cohesive and concerted approach that links words to actions tot launch a collective effort consisting of vigorous and sustained actions aimed at achieving the sustainable prosperity of humankind. In that regard, we would like to welcome the President's choice of a theme for this session: "Sustainable Development Goals: a new impetus to transform our world". That theme will, we hope, lead to the creation of the necessary foundations on which we can move towards those goals.

The scarcity of financial resources available for development is cause for the reappraisal of official development assistance so as to make it more effective, particularly for the most vulnerable countries. Such

development assistance will help to make those countries more resistant to economic, social and environmental shocks, both inside and outside their borders. In that framework, Africa is the continent with the youngest population in the world and the most vulnerable countries, which should be especially borne in mind as we implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To reduce its vulnerability and build up its resistance to shocks, Africa will need deep structural transformation in order to develop a dynamic private sector — an engine for development. The development and implementation of public policies should fully involve the creation of employment and economic opportunities for the most vulnerable parts of the population, specifically women and young people, so as to include them effectively in socioeconomic life and enable them to develop their potential. Substantial investment in making women and young people more independent is needed, particularly because the scourges of terrorism, extremism and intolerance, as well as trafficking in illicit arms and drugs, all accentuate the misery and weakness of the most vulnerable parts of the population.

Partnerships and innovative financing schemes are needed to accelerate dynamic growth in Africa. New technologies must, therefore, serve the interest of sustainable development.

Changing the economic model on the African continent is impossible without sustainable access to energy. That is a challenge for Africa. Today, seven out of ten Africans — a total of 700 million Africans — do not have access to electricity. That is why the Heads of State and Government of the African Union countries decided to work with the support of the international community on a robust plan to accelerate the electrification of the continent through renewable energies, so that we can move from 25 to 80 per cent access to energy in 10 years. A fund devoted to financing renewable energy in Africa has been put in place to collect contributions for Africa within the framework of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

As a spokesman for Africa on renewable energies, I would like to call on the international community, particularly financial institutions, to work with our continent in implementing those objectives so that we can build a strong African continent that is respectful of commitments to the environment and sustainable development.

Development can be sustainable only with peace and stability. Peace and stability cannot be ensured without development. We therefore need to state that peace, an essential asset for the harmonious development of humankind, continues to face great challenges.

Terrorism has struck around the world, threatening peace and international stability. We firmly condemn the barbarous acts that have struck Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Turkey and Pakistan, to name just a few. We reiterate our deep sympathy for and solidarity with all countries affected by such instances of obscurantism. We are convinced that, although one might try to defeat terrorism using military means alone, it cannot be prevented or contained except by significant socioeconomic investments aimed at reducing radicalization.

In the Middle East, terror and mindless violence have led to desolation in Syria and Yemen, while the international community has still not managed to reach a sustainable resolution to the conflicts in the region. Our collective passivity regarding the impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process also dangerously reduces the possibilities for a successful resolution to the conflict. Guinea has always unambiguously expressed its unconditional solidarity with the just Palestinian cause, and we are convinced that the solution needed in the Middle East must be based on two States living peacefully, side by side, within internationally recognized borders.

Regarding the embargo that has for a long time afflicted Cuba, we encourage all efforts to normalize relations between that country and the United States.

On the African continent, new and old crises — often fratricidal — continue to undermine stability. We welcome the support extended by this Organization to build peace in Africa, specifically in Central Africa and Mali. Guinea has actively contributed to the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali through the deployment of a battalion of 850 men in Kidal. However, it has paid the heavy price of losing nine soldiers to violent attacks committed by terrorist groups that are threatening the stability of the region. That is why we ask, while maintaining respect for the sovereignty of States and the peacekeeping mandates, for the adoption of a legal framework that endows the United Nations

with stronger power regarding counter-terrorism. That will enable international forces to improve their intelligence capacities in order to better defend and fight back against terrorist attacks. With that in mind, the President of Liberia and I recently carried out a mission in Guinea-Bissau. In that regard, a preventive, coordinated, concerted and coherent approach on a daily basis seems required so as to be able to grasp the profound causes of such crises and the factors that help perpetuate them.

We welcome the adoption on 27 April of the almost identical resolutions — General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) — on the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, with particular emphasis on prevention and the integration of women and young people in all sectors of activity in our societies. Guinea — which, at its request, was inscribed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2011 — believes that such a framework offers us the opportunity to evaluate the nature and scope of our collaboration with the Commission in order to keep it in line with our needs.

If I may, I will share with the Assembly some aspects of the current situation of Guinea. After two stressful years, Guinea became free of the transmission of the Ebola virus as of 29 December 2015. The fight against Ebola was difficult and arduous, but our efforts, supported by the international community, have put an end to that terrible disease. I would like to pay tribute to the solidarity shown by other countries affected by the epidemic. The victory against Ebola belongs to everyone and is something that we should all celebrate.

However, the road before us is long, because the epidemic has greatly undermined all economic activity in our country. The most vulnerable people, particularly women and children, have been made even more vulnerable, and our challenges lie in the need to ensure their social reinsertion. The virulence of the disease has identified the weaknesses of our health-care system and the sectors that need special attention in order to ensure the resilience of our people and our continent.

Therefore, in the context of the post-Ebola recovery, Guinea has developed its strategy, which was presented here, along with those of Liberia and Sierra Leone, at the International Ebola Recovery Conference organized by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We wish to express our gratitude to our partners who have fulfilled the pledges that they made at the Conference, and invite others that have not yet done so to make their promises a reality, so that Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone will be are able to reconnect quickly with sustainable development.

Despite the Ebola epidemic, the people of Guinea have demonstrated remarkable resilience and solidarity. That has allowed us to pursue many reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law and at developing a framework conducive to investment and governance that inclludes all components of society. On the macroeconomic front, after a long period of fiscal restraint, the country has just concluded its eighth and final review with the International Monetary Fund.

The United Nations remains the only viable alternative for the promotion and emergence of prosperous and inclusive societies that respect human rights and the environment. Nevertheless,we cannot deny that our Organization must constantly reform its bodies and its working methods so as to be able to address threats to peace and security and the challenges of underdevelopment and to assist in the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I wish to conclude by paying tribute and expressing our sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership and immense contribution to the world that we are all aspiring to build. We thank him for his tireless efforts and dedication, particularly with regard to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Those agreements will certainly form a significant part of the legacy of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Issoufou (*spoke in French*): It is now 71 years since our Organization, the United Nations, was created to ensure peace, security, cooperation, economic development and respect for human rights worldwide. During those 71 years, our Organization has been successful in those areas. That success would have been impossible without the work and unwavering dedication shown by the tens of thousands of women and men employed today by the United Nation. I would like to take this opportunity to honour them.

I also pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has led our Organization with courage and wisdom throughout the past decade. I congratulate him on his work, particularly regarding the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, where his commitment proved instrumental, and also for his role in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Finally, I would like to express once again our gratitude for his commitment to Africa, and to the Niger in particular. We could always count on his support during the multifaceted crises that our country has experienced in recent years.

In September last year, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims to eradicate poverty by that year and leave no one behind in the process. At the heart of that project is our commitment to place mankind at the centre of development and meet the requirements and limitations of our planet Earth in terms of our production and consumption habits.

Two months later, the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change came to complete that important campaign through a package of actions aiming, on the one hand, at limiting the rise in the average global temperature to less than 2°C, thanks to courageous measures to mitigate the causes of climate change, and on the other hand, at taking measures to strengthen resilience in the face of climate change. Therefore, the theme of this session — "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world" — is very much in line with the transformational vision and mission of the climate-change programme.

The evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in late 2015 showed that even though not all the Goals were met, remarkable progress had indeed been made. We note in that connection that in the fight against poverty, the goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty was achieved in 2010. Similarly, in education, the number of school-age children not in school was halved, and in the health area, infant and maternal mortality was also halved.

Unfortunately, those positive results hide huge disparities and inequalities. In fact, those results were strongly influenced by progress in Asia and Latin America owing to high and sustained growth rates there over the period. African countries, especially those in the sub-Saharan region, have seen little progress and continue to face significant challenges in terms of development and the fight against poverty.

The results obtained through the achievement of the MDGs are the starting point from which we begin our journey towards fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Our capacity to achieve our goals by that deadline will depend on our ability to change political and economic conditions, both in individual countries and on a global scale. It will also depend on our ability to honour the commitments we undertook at the Paris Conference on Climate Change.

Turning to political and economic conditions, the current situation does not inspire optimism. It is, therefore, essential that we create a new type of political and economic governance worldwide. In the economic sphere, it is obvious that the functioning of the global economy must be fully re-evaluated. We need to find a better balance between speculative financial capital and industrial capital by orienting more capital towards the real economy. Such a new approach would enable developing countries to receive more capital and more investment. That, in turn, would sustain stronger economic growth, which would lead to global economic growth and stability.

International measures to support direct foreign investment in the least developed countries are important, something that we should put in place as soon as possible. They are crucial in the framework of the support that that group of countries requires in order to realize economic and social development. The fact that such a programme seeks to strengthen

assistance to those countries that need it most, specifically the least developed countries, reveals the inclusive dimension of the programme. We welcome in particular the willingness to step up the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, reaffirmed in the Istanbul Declaration, and the Programme of Action resulting from the Midterm Review Conference for the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, held in Antalya, Turkey, last May.

The Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, whose first three-year strategic plan was approved by its governing body in July, will be commissioned in 2017 and will be a valuable instrument for promoting infrastructure development, diversifying production and creating added value. That is essential for strengthening income-generation and increasing the incomes of people in those countries.

Reforming the international financial system, creating new possibilities for access to sources of financing, and establishing an adequate framework for restructuring sovereign debt are all are indispensable measures if we are to strengthen the economic capabilities of developing countries in the area of financing sustainable development. The same applies to mobilizing the private sector and encouraging it to take a greater stake in working towards the goals of collective development.

With regard to the United Nations, we encourage the long-term positioning of United Nations funds, programmes and agencies to favour development. Such an approach is about promoting consistency and complementarity, which are key for the development work of those entities to be effective. Programmes that are at the centre of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must make it possible for Africa to become better integrated into global trade. But that integration will be beneficial to the continent only if we put an end to the unequal terms of trade.

Several studies have in fact demonstrated that if the share of African countries in global trade were to increase by only 1 per cent, that would provide additional annual income of more than $200 billion — about five times the amount received by Africa in the form of official development assistance. Concretely, Africa would receive greater resources if the unequal exchanges were discontinued.

Africa must also have the firm political resolve to develop intra-African commerce, which now accounts for only 10 per cent of trade. We need for it to reach a level that would strengthen our position in global trade.

Reaching the Sustainable Development Goals will be feasible only with greater synergy in action, robust solidarity and, most importantly, respect for all of the commitments undertaken by the global partnerships for development.

On the political front, the United Nations needs thorough reform. The governance of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, needs to be reviewed. That process is long overdue. The Organization should be made effective and legitimate in the way it addresses essential issues of peace and international security. The reform must rectify the existing anachronisms — both the current system of geographical representation in the Council, and the methods whereby decisions are taken. The consequences of those methods are sometimes disastrous and have had effects that are the opposite of what is sought.

On the modalities of Security Council decision-making, it is essential that the countries most affected in issues before the Council, especially the neighbouring countries of countries in conflict, be involved and heard in the conflict-resolution process. Neighbouring countries, which often share the same communities on both sides of the borders, are the first to suffer from the effects of conflict. The Council must therefore absolutely take into account the concerns expressed by those countries so as to avoid situations of the kind that currently exists in Libya.

The field of peacekeeping operations is of particular interest to the Niger, a country that is engaged in a merciless struggle against terrorism and in protecting its territory. Based on experience, and faced with the evidence of the inadequacy of current approaches to peacekeeping, which have shown their limits on many occasions, we are convinced that those approaches can and should be improved. In that regard, the Niger believes that the mandates of certain United Nations missions urgently need revision so as to strengthen their offensive capabilities, with a view to improving their ability to respond to the challenge of protecting civilians.

My country fully supports a major strategic change, particularly given the general trend of attacks by warring parties and other non-State groups against civilians.

For the populations concerned, it is inconceivable that, in the face of terrorist acts and abuses inflicted on local people, the peacekeeping missions deployed on the ground to protect them are powerless to avert the imminent massacres of civilians at the most crucial moments. The missions must be able to take decisive and effective action.

In reality, no one can predict what is going to happen between now and 2030. All we can say is that we will not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals unless there is a profound change in political and economic governance. We live in an uncertain world. We live in an unstable world that is facing all types of visible and invisible threats. Achieving the SDGs in an unstable and chaotic world will therefore be a non-linear, unstable and chaotic process that can suffer great impacts from small things.

I recall the famous metaphor of the so-called butterfly effect, whereby a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a storm in Texas. The butterfly effect is that drop of water that makes the vase overflow. The signs of tension that we see here and there in the world can be the little sparks that might provoke a vast fire. These signs of tension are currently being obscured by the fight against terrorism, but the rivalries and other competitions among the great Powers can lead to irreparable consequences.

Small countries often bear the costs of the rivalries of the great Powers and suffer the consequences of some of their failures to understand. The chaos that we are currently seeing in Libya and its impacts on neighbouring countries attest to that fact. Those effects and the presence of terrorist organizations in northern Mali and in the Lake Chad Basin, where Boko Haram is committing atrocities, could irreparably compromise the ability of the countries affected to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. In the Niger, where Boko Haram carries out regular incursions, we have more than 167,000 internally displaced persons, about a 100,000 refugees at risk of starvation and epidemics, and more than 18,000 children who cannot go to school. It is therefore urgent that we stabilize the situation in Libya. It is urgent that we help Libya to emerge from that chaos. It is urgent that we stabilize Mali and neutralize terrorists. It is urgent that we support the Multinational Joint Task Force that is operating in the Lake Chad Basin against Boko Haram.

The terrorist threats at our doorstep have led our country to redirect significant resources to the security sector. Without that, the Niger could have achieved the Millennium Development Goals and started the process of implementing the SDGs under much better conditions. Ten per cent of our budgetary resources have been oriented towards defence and security. In spite of that, the Niger was able to reduce poverty from 63 per cent in 2011 to 45 per cent in 2015, to achieve MDG 1, on reducing extreme hunger and poverty by half, Goal 4, on significantly reducing child and maternal mortality, and the MDG target on access to water and sanitation in urban areas.

Our recovery programme will allow us to further improve those results and move toward the implementation of the SDGs. My ambition is to leave the country, at the end of my last term, radically transformed — a Niger where democratic institutions are stronger, where the fight against corruption has made great strides, and where inequalities have been beaten back and the middle class has grown; a united, peaceful and safe Niger with zero hunger and well equipped with infrastructure of every kind; a Niger that has made good progress on its demographic transition process, where school is free and compulsory for all persons under 16 years, where 40 per cent of our children attend vocational and technical training and leave with a trade or profession, and where universities train the most competent professionals for the subregion; a Niger with access to health, where clean water and sanitation are ensured and where employment, specifically for young people, is abundant; and, finally, a country resolutely engaged on the way to the unity of our continent — in other words, a Niger resolutely set along the way to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*) On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Niger for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic.

President Touadéra *(spoke in French)*: At the outset, may I warmly congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. He may rest assured of the full support of my delegation in working towards the complete success of this session of the Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark on the outstanding way in which he presided over the previous session. May I also pay warm tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, not only for what he has done since the previous session, but also for all the laudable work he has so untiringly carried out to achieve the noble objectives of the United Nations since he was elected 10 years ago. I particularly commend and am grateful for his personal involvement and focus on my country, the Central African Republic, during the hard times that it has passed through.

It is a great honour for me to address the Assembly to describe the evolution of the situation in the Central African Republic and to share with it my country's vision regarding the major issues facing our Organization.

I stand before the Assembly today to bear witness to the entire international community of the recognition by the Central African people of the invaluable support to my country, the Central African Republic, which has now returned to stability and constitutional legality. From this rostrum, on behalf of the Central African people, I wish to pay tribute to all actions carried out by the United Nations system, particularly in connection with the deployment of the international forces who are at this very time working to bring security and peacebuilding in my country.

I wish to express once again the gratitude of the people of the Central African Republic to the international community in its entirety for its solidarity and constant support during our efforts to return to constitutional legality, thereby putting an end to the political transition that was established after the coup of 24 March 2013.

May I also acknowledge the spirit of the people of the Central African Republic, who, in such large and determined numbers, voted in an exemplary election, thus demonstrating their espousal of democracy and constitutional order. I also pay a warm tribute to the entire political class in the Central African Republic for the maturity it displayed to the entire world in respecting the voice of the people in the elections.

As President, in whom is vested the trust of the entire Central African people, I have taken stock of the immense challenges we face and the expectations of my fellow citizens, who understandably yearn for peace, national reconciliation and socioeconomic development.

The Central African Republic has turned the page on its dark history. Central Africans are more than ever determined to finally break the cycle of violence so as to be able to aspire legitimately to peace, security, justice, freedom and sustainable development. Since my accession to the presidency of the country, steps have been taken to ensure that the Government and all State institutions share the common goal of rebuilding the country through the necessary reforms.

No State can claim to be able to develop while its economic, social or indeed its political fabric remains plagued by the evils of corruption, injustice and impunity. I can assure the Assembly that the fight against corruption is at the heart of our concerns. Therefore, the Government that I have the heavy responsibility of leading will spare no effort to establish a mechanism for the relentless fight against corruption and financial crime.

The Central African Republic has certainly begun to revive the democratic process, but the situation still remains fragile. Much remains to be done. That is why as soon as I was inaugurated as President of the Republic, I expressed my ambition to bring together all Central Africans around a State reconstruction project, so that we in the Central African Republic would become the masters of our own destiny and of the development of our country.

I am committed to leading the work for a political, economic, social and cultural transformation that will enable us to dispel the evils of insecurity, the dysfunction of political institutions, corruption, the deterioration of living conditions and the loss of moral standards, all of which have undermined our society. The priorities of my Government are therefore based on four main pillars: peace and security, national reconciliation and administrative reform, economic recovery, and justice and human rights.

With regard to peace and security, the imperative for the Government consists in the rapid application of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and repatriation programmes so that all Central African men and women of all walks of life can live in peace and security with one another throughout the land.

Similarly, security-sector reform remains a major concern of the Government. A delegation of the Central African Republic outlined the strategies and programmes for such reforms in the Central African Republic at United Nations Headquarters in June. A decision was taken to support my country's endeavours in the recognition of the efforts at dialogue with armed groups that I have undertaken since my assumption of responsibility. That is why I am taking this opportunity to urge a major mobilization of our partners at the next Brussels Conference for the Central African Republic, scheduled for 17 November, with regard to their contribution to finance the security-sector reform component.

On the issue of the restoration of State authority and the process of redeploying the Administration, the Government has undertaken, with the assistance of the international community, including the United Nations, actions to ensure the presence of public authority throughout the territory and tot ensureg peace and security. The defence and security forces must therefore continue to bolster our border control against the threats of cross-border crime, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, money-laundering, trafficking in drugs and narcotics, and terrorism, particularly by the Lord's Resistance Army, and human trafficking.

The Government has undertaken emergency measures aimed at rebuilding the Central African armed forces, which will help to enable the establishment of an inclusive republican army. To achieve that, the Central African Republic, through me, calls for the total lifting of the arms embargo imposed on it. It must be remembered that the ban, even if necessary at the time, is no longer justified today in this new era of national reconstruction.

Justice and human rights involve the rehabilitation of the institutions of the judiciary so as to guarantee the rights of citizens and strengthen the fight against impunity. In that regard, it is appropriate to strengthen the Special Criminal Court for the Central African Republic so as to bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice before the competent courts and to deal with the issue of reparations for the harm suffered.

Concerning economic recovery, the Government has implemented reforms aimed at improving the business climate in order to attract private investment and has committed itself to reestablishing State infrastructure to support growth. The cyclical, repetitive crises in the Central African Republic have led to the precarious living conditions of our people and to widespread impoverishment. I welcome the fact that the international community has understood what is at stake here.

My Government, for its part, is firmly committed to peacebuilding, national reconciliation, the re-establishment of the defence and security forces and an economic recovery plan. Those are our goals; those are our priorities. I have every confidence that, together, Central Africans will pursue those goals with all their strength and all their energy.

The Central African Republic is once again among Member States. The Central African Republic has taken its place as a free and democratic State among the community of nations. It is ready to contribute to building a world of peace, tolerance, freedom, justice and democracy. Despite our determination to take charge of our destiny, the Central African Republic is still fragile, absolutely in need of the support of all our partners, both bilateral and multilateral. On behalf of my country, I again call for the support of fellow Member States.

The United Nations remains the indispensable forum par excellence for addressing global issues and researching appropriate solutions. As a Member, the Central African Republic can assure the Assembly of our abiding commitment to the ideals of the Organization, founded on the values of equality, peace, security, justice and development, to which all peoples throughout the world aspire.

I welcome the relevance of the theme of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly: "Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", chosen a year after the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The choice of that theme is justified by the desire to see those Goals realized by 2030. For the time has come to reverse the trend of extreme poverty, which continues, unfortunately, in many parts of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The time has come to reduce inequalities between rich and poor and to create an environment that provides a good place to live for the well-being of everyone.

It is recognized that the majority of the least developed countries and post-conflict countries, including the Central African Republic, did not attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There are several reasons for that, chief among them political instability. In fact, in 2011 the Government developed a framework for accelerating the effort to achieve the MDGs dealing with hunger and food security, but the crisis of 2012 ended those actions, leaving them incomplete.

The Central African Republic has officially launched the implementation process for the Sustainable Development Goals, involving all national stakeholders — the public administration, civil society, the private sector, international partners, development partners and international non-governmental organizations. That clearly indicates the willingness of the Government resolutely to lead the process of achieving the SDGs and avoid the uneven results that characterized the process of the attainment of the MDGs, for the reasons I cited earlier.

The Government learned lessons from the experience and has undertaken to implement the SDGs on new bases involving partnership and the participation of all strata of our society. Thus the Government has undertaken, within the framework of its national reconstruction policy, the preparation of a recovery and peacebuilding programme in the Central African Republic that includes humanitarian assistance, early recovery and development. There are three main planks: peace, reconciliation and security; the renewal of the social contract between the State and the people; and economic recovery and the revitalization of the productive sectors.

To achieve this, the Government intends to develop a partnership with national and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, development partners and community-based organizations so as to create the synergies necessary to emerge from the crisis. To that end, the planned study on the vision of the Central African Republic through 2040 will be carried out within the framework of the 2063 Agenda for Africa and will include concrete objectives.

With the support of technical and financial partners, we will set up an appropriate institutional framework for the follow-up and monitoring of the work to achieve the SDGs. Under its auspices we will define our priorities in the context of the recovery and peacebuilding programme, the recommendations of the Common African Position and the conclusions of the consultative regional meeting on the SDGs, held in October 2013.

The issue of migrants and refugees, which affects the entire world, has in recent years worsened and is now a major concern of the international community. It is a very pressing problem that requires the attention of every country, regardless of their involvement in the management of migratory flows.

The high-level meeting that was just held was an opportunity to highlight the pressing global challenges caused by these mass movements of peoples, in order to devise well-thought-out solutions within a framework of international responsibility-sharing. I welcome the commitment of Member States to seek a more humane solution to the issue. At the Valletta Summit on Migration and the first Global Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul, world leaders shared their views on the root causes of migration and displaced persons.

In the Central African Republic, sustainable solutions to ensure the return of our compatriots who have been displaced within our country to their areas of origin, as well as to the issue of refugees, are being studied in order to create a national platform for disaster risk management and the prevention and management of poor socioeconomic conditions such as low wages, unemployment, underemployment in rural areas, poverty and lack of resources, which are very often the cause of these movements.

On climate change and sustainable development, it is urgent that the world adopt sound policies that can generate growth and take into account the problem of climate change. Such growth must be able to reduce

poverty. Protection of the environment, effective management of resources, and economic growth integrated into green growth provide a valuable opportunity for African countries. It is not fair that Africa should pay a higher price when it is but a victim. That is why I urge the international community to focus in particular on the adoption of an appropriate mechanism to support Africa. The commitments made at the Paris climate summit must be respected so as to bring about true sustainable development.

Before I conclude, let me say that we trust that Member States all will decide to provide our Organization with the means to attain the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Central African Republic will continue to make its modest contribution to our Organization and in our common quest for peace, security and development for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Central African Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Assoumani (*spoke in French*): I welcome this opportunity to address the General Assembly for the first time since my election as President of the Union of the Comoros. I am very grateful to the people of the Comoros, who have made it possible for me to speak here on their behalf.

I would like, from this lofty rostrum, to congratulate the people of the Comoros, who have been able to turn the page in terms of achieving political stability and to put aside useless discord to work together for the benefit of future generations.

I am indeed the fourth President in 20 years to have been elected in a free, transparent and democratic election with internationally recognized results. My country has experienced its third peaceful handover of power, in which the opposition replaced the legitimate incumbent following peaceful elections.

I thank the international community and all of our partners, and the United Nations system in particular, for having always stood by our side. I hope that after the election their assistance will help us to consolidate political stability and to preserve democracy and the rule of law, so as to bring about the economic and social development of the country and the well-being of our people.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson, on his election to head this seventy-first session. I am convinced that his experience and his proven knowledge of international issues, added to his personal brilliance, will lead the Assembly to great success at this session. I cannot fail to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for having brilliantly led the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

Let me also hail the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. He has shown great talent throughout his term. As he nears the time to relinquish his duties, I wish to join in the unanimous tributes to his commitment to promoting peace, development and fighting climate change. The people and the Government of the Comoros are deeply grateful for the interest he has always shown in the development of the Union of the Comoros and, in particular, for the special attention that he paid to our most recent electoral process, ensuring its smooth running and its final results, which were unanimously accepted.

Let me lastly applaud all those who have spoken from this rostrum for their pertinent remarks, in particular His Excellency President Barack Obama, who is also approaching the end of his term. He perfectly represents the United States of America – the tolerant America, the generous America, respectful of the universal values of freedom and the rule of law, and the America that the world wants.

The theme of the current session is "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". It fits in perfectly with the decision taken by international leaders 15 years ago to establish a set of world objectives: the Millennium Development Goals. The theme also encourages us to build on the considerable progress made in the years that have followed: a steady decline in poverty throughout the world, an increasing number of children in school, spectacular gains in lowering child mortality, greater access to drinking water, and progress in the fight against malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis, which has helped to save millions of lives.

Indeed, considerable efforts have been made to help our world achieve greater prosperity, equality, freedom and respect for human dignity, and to become a place where research and peacekeeping tirelessly persevere. Furthermore, the ambitious new long-term programme that we adopted last year to improve the lives of our population and to protect the planet for future generations enables us to optimistically perceive a future when we can reduce poverty, improve health and education, build a more sustainable habitat, fight climate change and protect our oceans and forests.

However, the issue of refugees and migrants, which has been the focus of our debate since the start of the current session, requires urgent action. We are all well aware that those migrant men and women do not put their lives at risk, perilously travelling over land and sea, for pleasure or for tourism; instead, they are fleeing from war, poverty and misery. The theme of this session, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", comes at just the right time, as it allows us to envisage sustainable development and even to stabilize populations at home, so that they can move only out of choice and in perfect harmony.

And so it is up to our Organization, and therefore each one of us, to take immediate action to stop the violence that is a result of all kinds of extremism and fanaticism, leading to heinous and barbaric acts around the world, particularly in Africa, which is currently experiencing terrorism that knows no borders. Terrorists are neither Muslim nor Jewish, neither Catholic nor animist. They do not belong to any religion or any civilization — they are merely barbarians. That is why my country, the Union of the Comoros, is willing to support all actions aimed at fighting the scourge of terrorism.

It is also urgent that our Organization, that is to say every Member State, finally agree on a definitive, fair and sustainable solution to the Israel-Arab conflict, based on a two-State solution and in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Nothing can justify our silent response to the terror of that conflict with its toll of victims, which is fuelled both by the extremism that comes from all sides and by our culpable inertia. Nothing can justify the arrogance of those who, from this very rostrum, defy the world by taunting this world body, an Organization that provides a framework for all to recognize the sovereignty of States, to participate in international affairs and to seek peaceful solutions to the problems afflicting us.

For my part, I wish to convey the trust of my people in the United Nations, an Organization that has acknowledged our sovereignty and independence, and that, 41 years later, makes it possible for us to be here. I believe that finding a solution to the issue of the sovereignty of the Palestinian people and resolving that 70-year-old conflict will spur the resolution of other conflicts in the Near and Middle East.

Allow me, at this stage in my address, to respectfully draw the Assembly's attention to the need to draw a distinction between migrants and internally displaced persons. My country, the Union of Comoros, had its sovereignty recognized by the United Nations in 1975. It is made up of four islands, and, like other countries, we have observed the subsequent, unavoidable movement of our population within islands and between islands, including the island of Mayotte — which is, unfortunately, still under French administration. Those trips are made to visit family, celebrate marriages, go to the burial of a close relative and for various other reasons. And yet they descend into chaos on a daily basis — every year and every month, those trips lead to deaths of hundreds of our fellow citizens in the channel between the three islands and the island of Mayotte, to the indifference of the international community.

The Assembly is fully aware of the issue concerning the island of Mayotte and has devoted no fewer than 15 resolutions to the issue since 1977. Unfortunately, it has yet to be resolved. We hope that, with the Assembly's multifaceted support, a viable solution will be found to accommodate both the Comoros and France — two countries that, in spite of that dispute, have remained partners and have established friendly relations over the years. I am convinced that the dialogue that I initiated with President Chirac in 2005, and which

has been pursued by successive French and Comorian Governments, will help to solve our unpleasant dispute. We must engage in frank and intelligent dialogue, respecting the interests of both parties and, above all, international law, in order to make it possible for future generations of French, Comorian and Franco-Comorian people to live in peace and harmony and to be protected from the radicalization and extremism that have weakened regions all over the world.

Today, the United Nations is the only place where the world's population can come together and look towards a common future of shared peace and prosperity — for which we have high expectation from this Organization, which regulates the international system. However, our Organization is increasingly perceived as inefficient in terms of defending the rights of the most deprived in relation to the most powerful. The Union of the Comoros is also in favour of broad reform of the United Nations, echoing the ideas of a large number of countries, in particular with regard to the need to grant Africa a permanent seat on the Security Council. We believe that respect for international law, the sovereignty of States and the integrity of their territories will contribute to greater peace and prosperity throughout the world.

There are other challenges to be overcome before we can achieve sustainable development. We must eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all within the framework of the new Agenda within the next 15 years. As a small island developing State, the Union of the Comoros seeks to turn the private sector and civil society, together with the Administration, into drivers of the struggle to transform economic growth, in particular in Africa, so as to provide decent job prospects for young people, improve services, develop agriculture and reduce inequalities deriving from income, gender and living environments. All that is so we can deal successfully with the emerging problem of climate change.

Mr. Ali (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I want to end on an optimistic note. Getting back to the theme of the Sustainable Development Goals, I want to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, and congratulate him on the success of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. His commitment and capacity for mobilization enabled the eventual adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. My country signed the agreement and will submit it for ratification by the Parliament during its session in October.

On this occasion, I wish every success to His Majesty King Mohammed VI, whose beautiful country, Morocco, will host, in Marrakesh in 2017, the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties. With the permission of my friend, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, I invite the entire international community to go on that occasion to Morocco, which fully deserves to host the twenty-second Conference of the Parties. The success of the Conference will contribute to reducing insecurity, which is a destabilizing factor in many regions in the world, particularly in Africa, where people have been the most likely to resort to migration, which is a global concern that we addressed on the opening days of our session. Indeed, the success of the Conference will be reflected in improvements in our daily life and will provide a tangible contribution to people's well-being and prosperity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mansour (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for all the sincere efforts he has made and continues to make to ensure the success of the peace process in Yemen and to put an end to the suffocating crises that plague Yemen. We thank his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh

Ahmed, for all of his good efforts, which we praises and support. I wish to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. We wish him every success in fulfilling his noble mission.

Last year from this rostrum I made a promise to restore Yemen's legitimacy (see A/70/PV.17). I came to New York from Aden, the interim capital of Yemen, months after the coup d'état against State institutions — which was led by the militias of the Houthis and former President Saleh — had plunged Yemen into a meaningless war, tearing apart its social fabric and decimating its economic and financial capabilities and infrastructure.

Today I address the Assembly while the State leadership at home is running the State from inside, despite all the difficulties. The Vice-President and the Government in its entirety in the liberated governates have aborted this destructive scheme led by Iran through mercenaries in Yemen. Today the coup forces are motivated by a vendetta against the people, pushing women and children to the fronts of death without any conscience or humanity.

We did not fire the first shot in Yemen's war. We were in Sana'a before the coup. We have repeatedly called for an end to the wars, tragedies and conflicts that have been destroying Yemen over the past 50 years as a result of a corrupt Government, the selfish control of national wealth and power, heavy centralization and the neglect of most of the regions of the country.

All of those factors led to an increase in tensions and the eruption of the popular revolution against the former regime in February 2011 in order to bring about change. I called on everyone to build a cherished, democratic, civilian federal State in which human rights, the specifities of all the regions of Yemen, the dignity of women, the rights of children and the rights of all marginalized social groups are respected.

The Assembly may recall that I stood here four years ago (see A/67/PV.9) and spoke about the steps that we had taken and that we would take on the path towards a political transition of State power in the context of the Gulf Cooperation Council's initiative and on the basis of United Nations resolutions. I told the Assembly then that Iran was blocking all the measures that we were taking through a variety of actions and interventions. Today, we are suffering the consequences of its meaningless practices via the Houthi and former President Saleh's coup militias, whose actions have turned everything upside down.

We presented to the world a remarkable and unique experience, one unprecedented in the history of Yemen and the region, through the comprehensive national dialogue conference in which all parties participated.. It addressed the problems of Yemen in depth and drew up a road map for its future, which led to the drafting of a new federal civilian Constitution. We were on the cusp of building a new Yemen and completing the transitional phase when those militias carried out a coup against the State, its legitimacy and the national consensus.

The battles raging today are none of our doing. They were imposed on us by the coup by the Houthi/Saleh militias' coalition, which turned against the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and Implementation Mechanism and the outcome of the dialogue. They rejected the national consensus and took over the capital and certain governorates. At a time when everyone else was embracing peace and national partnership, they were shooting everyone, besieging cities and killing innocent people in order to safeguard their interests for power and wealth and seizing the capacities of the country and plundering its resources.

Let me stress that we are not advocating revenge. We do not seek to eliminate anyone from the Yemeni landscape. Rather, we extend our hands to all to build a new Yemen. Despite the extensive damage caused by the coup scheme on the political, social, economic and cultural fronts, we continue to see the rebels as a Yemeni group that must return to reason. We do not take away their right to a future.

We are still yearning for a life in dignity and safety for all Yemenis. Our project is one of life, construction, hope and stability for the new Federation of Yemen. It is a project for all Yeminis, who painstakingly drafted its parameters in the national dialogue and its outcome. It calls for a federal State founded on justice and the equitable distribution of power and wealth. More than once we have urged them to demonstrate their loyalty to their homeland, and we have called on them to dissociate themselves from the State that did not bring anything to Yemen except destruction and fuel for wars.

The peace we aspire to cannot accept control by militias and sectarian gangs of the State's capacities, over medium and heavy weapons and missles that target the security and stability of Yemen, the Arabian

Peninsula and the Gulf region. Our endeavours for peace can never overshadow the great sacrifices made by our people and their noble objectives. Any appropriate solutions should aim to end the coup and all its consequences, first and foremost by making sure the armed militias withdraw, surrender their weapons and give up the institutions they are controlling. Afterward, we should complete the political process by endorsing the new draft Constitution and hold general elections.

Therefore, we welcomed and cooperated with all sincere efforts that the United Nations made, as well as with all other ideas contributed to bring about peace. But they were rejected by the party involved in the coup, which refused to entertain them in a positive spirit.

We want to tell the world in very clear terms that extremism and sectarian terrorism sponsored by Iran in the region have bred and will continue to breed counter-extremism that feeds on terrorism. Brutality and terrorism, as demonstrated by those involved in the coup against the Yemeni people, feed and nourish the seeds of terrorism. We are all suffering from terrorism. This is why, on behalf of all Yemenis, I declare our full commitment to relentlessly combating terrorism. But let me stress that we cannot defeat terrorism in Yemen without tackling its root causes, the most important of which is the extremism and vindictive acts of terrorism by the Houthi Saleh militas.

The political vacuum caused by the war, and the economic depression triggered by the black-market policies that impoverished the State and plundered its resources, were executed by the coup militias from the very beginning. They all led to a situation of stark poverty that is being exploited by terrorist groups to enlist people, recruit children, stockpile weapons and take control of cities. Unless we take effective measures to address those root causes, Yemen and the entire region will continue to suffer.

For the Yemenis, the criminal acts perpetrated by the militias, including the systematic killing of civilians, children and the elderly, especially in Taiz Governorate, the abductions and forced disappearances, the besieged cities, and the suppression of public freedoms of the Yemeni people are acts of terrorism on a par with those perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Da'esh, Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. The terrorism inflicted on the Yemeni people at the hands of the coup militias is similar to what they suffered at the hands of Da'esh and Al-Qaida. The Yemeni people are the only people who are affected by the Yemini version of Da'esh, Al-Qaida and Hezbollah. The world should understand the Yemeni people's priorities to attain freedom and fighti all terrorist groups, with their different forms and categories. The fait accompli policy when dealing with extremists constitutes a dangerous international precedent because it confers legitimacy on the violent and terrorist rebel groups that are forcibly imposing their will on the people.

The militias involved in the coup diverted the mandate of the Central Bank of Yemen from its main mission at a time when the economy of Yemen was on the brink of collapse, turning it into a tool of war against the Yemeni people. The militias used the resources of the Central Bank to fund the war, undermining their independence, systematically plundering their assets and devaluing the local currency with the aim of exhausting our cash reserves. Those are irresponsible economic policies. We therefore decided to move the Central Bank to the interim economic capital, Aden, to save what could still be saved and to prevent the total depletion of the reserves.

No one will benefit from this situation except terrorists, violent groups and the black-market trade networks. We wish to stress to the whole world that we took that step only after exercising considerable patience. Finally, our patience ran out after we assessed the dangers inherent in allowing the Bank to continue to be controlled by irresponsible militias that work for the profit of their leaders and are bent on impoverishing the people and the State institutions. The motivating idea was to end the war by restricting the flow of funds to those militias. In that connection, we call on the free world and its financial institutions to support and stand by us and to respond to these measures to save the Yemeni economy and to prevent the militias from controlling the future of Yemen.

The situation in the wake of the destructive war imposed on our people is a result of the plundering of the State's resources, the manipulation of the Central Bank's assets, the erosion of foreign currency reserves, the non-use of the local currency and the promotion of trade war, black-market practices and smuggling by the militias. These factors augur dangerous times for Yemen. We will not be able to pay the salaries of civil servants, which will exacerbate the humanitarian catastrophe at hand. The situation requires action and assistance by the international community to support the Government of Yemen in its efforts to generate

economic recovery and reconstruction. Let me stress that the Central Bank of Yemen remains fully committed to fulfilling its national and international obligations.

Notwithstanding the declarations of support every year, the strategic humanitarian plan for Yemen devised by the United Nations covers only a small portion of the growing essential needs that people are experiencing in the catastrophically difficult situation in Yemen. I take this opportunity to renew my call on all donor countries to fulfil their pledges and to provide more assistance in order to alleviate the suffering of Yemen. The Government of the Republic of Yemen wants to ensure that urgent humanitarian aid is delivered to all who are in need of it in all governates of Yemen, without exception. In that regard, I commend the great effort mounted by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre and the Gulf Cooperation Council relief and humanitarian organizations.

The Yemen that we aspire to build — the Yemen that will emerge from the ruins of the unjust war imposed on it by the Houthi/Saleh militias — will be better integrated into its immediate regional surroundings. It will be cognizant of its strategic and geopolitical position in the Arabian peninsula and the Gulf.

On this occasion I reiterate our thanks and gratitude to my brother King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as to the President and the Government of the United Arab Emirates and to all our kin in the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Coalition for the restoration of legitimacy in Yemen.

Three days from now, our great Yemeni people will celebrate the anniversary of the landmark Yemeni revolution of 26 September 1962, which declared Yemen a democratic republic. We recall with pride the glorious achievements of Yemen and the struggle of our Yemeni heroes. Allow me, from this rostrum, to stress to our people that the path of sacrifices charted by Yemenis in their struggle against backwardness and the Imamate system of government is being complemented today by the sacrifices of new heroes, who are defending the revolution and the Republic. We stand behind the overwhelming majority of Yemenis until victory and until we defeat the legions of the Imamate system and its heirs -- the former regime and its new version led by the treacherous Houthi/Saleh alliance — and halt their endeavours to establish a racist, theocratic system of government based on the "rule by the Islamic jurist". We reaffirm to our people that victory has never been closer.

Allow me to address our people from this rostrum as we celebrate the glorious anniversary of the revolution. To our Yemeni people who have suffered injustice, bereavement, displacement, fleeing, disappearance, killings and hunger, our dear and generous people, I say with a great deal of confidence that their sacrifices will not be in vain, that their aspirations will be fulfilled. We are bound to be victorious, and, God willing, we will carry out our just project. We will extract Yemen from the claws of Iran. We will raise the Yemeni flag over our precious national soil, every square foot of it, and we will lay the foundation for a just federal State. All along, we have been and we will continue to be pioneers of peace and security, advocates of love and harmony, advocates of dialogue and consultation.

The current situation truly pains me; it is heartbreaking for any Yemeni to see blood shed anywhere. I am responsible for all of Yemeni territory and people, from one end of the country to the other. Nothing is in my heart except the concerns of my people, my homeland and my desire to see my country enjoy prosperity and peace. We will continue to deal positively and patiently with all. We will make all necessary sacrifices in order to restore social peace and recover our national cohesion in accordance with our constitutional and moral responsibility vis-a-vis the suffering of our people in all parts of the country.

I feel ashamed that the Yemeni people have had to endure the persistent failures of successive Yemeni Governments over the past 50 years. In both the north and south of Yemen, they were unable to meet the five basic necessities of our people: water, health care, education, electricity and road networks. But there is no point in crying over a bygone era and its Governments. Have our people not suffered enough death and destruction? Have the authors of the coup d'état — the Houthi/Saleh militias — not heard the humanitarian calls from this international forum to cooperate with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Yemen in order to implement what we have agreed upon? I refer to the established terms of reference of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the national dialogue, the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2216 (2015), and the outcome of the peace talks in Kuwait.

From this rostrum, I wish to express our thanks and gratitude to His Royal Highness Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, and our brother people of Kuwait.

In conclusion, I wish to draw attention to the foremost issue of a just solution regarding the question of Palestine and its capital -- the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Yemen for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jocelerme Privert, Acting President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Acting President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Jocelerme Privert, Acting President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jocelerme Privert, Acting President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Acting President Privert (*spoke in French*): I have real pleasure in extending, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Haiti and in my own name, warm congratulations to Ambassador Peter Thomson on his election as President of our Assembly. His proven experience in international issues and his outstanding personal qualities bode well for the success of the seventy-first session.

I would also like to give a special greeting to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his outstanding performance at the head of our Organization, particularly his commitment to peace and the promotion of development in the world. Haiti's voice joins in the unanimous praise which crowns his second mandate in that office.

Seventy-one years ago, the fifty original States Members of the United Nations took the solemn and decisive commitment to build a new world order based on fundamental human rights. Before a world emerging from the tragedies of a terrible war, they championed the equality of men's and women's rights, the inviolable principle of parity of the subjects of international law and the right of peoples to self-determination. In a praiseworthy endeavour to heal the wounds of recent conflicts, they advocated better living conditions for the people of the world under the aegis of freedom and democracy.

From this rostrum, Haiti declares the raison d'être of our Organization to be more relevant in today's world than ever before. In the face of a succession of threats posed by the spectre of ecological peril, terrorist brutality and the persistence of various regional conflicts, we must reassert our faith in the purposes of our Organization. The values it embodies and the precepts it defends and promotes in the analysis and management of major contemporary issues and challenges are more pertinent than ever. Today it is more essential than ever that the United Nations fully assume its role in order to provide collective responses to all manner of crises threatening peace in the world. The encroachments of terrorism and the international problems of an economic, social and humanitarian nature are among the issues that the United Nations must address, in keeping with its original mission of human understanding and solidarity.

The Republic of Haiti is proud to have participated in the founding of the Organization. We strongly support the measures it undertakes to strengthen and broaden the scope of its actions. We also welcome the initiatives for necessary reform, particularly within the Security Council.

Haiti stands alongside and encourages the United Nations in its intentions to strengthen its capabilities in the conduct of peacekeeping operations, the fight against pandemics and health crises and the promotion of democracy and human rights, without overlooking or neglecting economic, social and cultural rights.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change perfectly illustrates the concept of a collective destiny for all peoples that lies at the heart of this Organization. This vision has inspired urgent and united international action in the face of an issue that threatens the very survival of our planet. The Agreement represents unquestionable success, and we sincerely hope that all established commitments and obligations are followed through.

The progress made over the past seven decades, whether in terms of human rights, peacekeeping or international development cooperation, is undeniable. This is in large part thanks to the powerful and generous vision that inspired the founders of our Organization, a vision that remains as potent as ever. While congratulations are in order for recent advances, some of which are truly remarkable, I would particularly like to acknowledge the peace agreement recently signed in Havana by the Government of our sister Republic of Colombia with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. We are forced to admit, however, that the obstacles hindering peace and sustainable development in the world remain numerous. Nevertheless, we welcome the recent rapprochement of the United States of America with Cuba, which is likely to further peace in our region.

The Republic of Haiti encourages the international community to pay further attention to the aspirations of the Republic of China on Taiwan to play a more active role in certain decisions and initiatives that could contribute to stability and reconciliation among peoples and nations.

Our delegation is particularly sensitive to two of the issues being addressed at the current session. I refer to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the issue of refugees, migrants and the forced displacement of people.

The next 15 years will provide a detailed demonstration of the actions and efforts of the peoples of the planet, resolutely engaged in a noble struggle to eradicate poverty and hunger in the world. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be both our compass and our milestones throughout humankind's journey towards a world free of unacceptable deprivation, shortcomings and failures.

The Republic of Haiti chooses to be among the States on the front line as we head towards sustainable development. Having acknowledged what is at stake, my Government has courageously decided to lay the foundations for our dedicated participation in the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to put our country firmly on track towards inclusive and sustainable development.

Through the purposeful appropriation of the SDGs and their integration into Haiti's development policies and strategies, we are enabling the country to take concrete action that will help to improve the living conditions of every Haitian. In that context, I fully support the adoption in Hangzhou by the Group of 20 of an action plan aimed at facilitating the launch of a sustainable development programme for 2030 and supporting the industrialization efforts of African and least developed countries. We have great hopes for the coming years.

We also pay particular attention to the Goals' approach to the issue of migration. Migration flows have always been at the core of the dynamics among the world's peoples. However, we are all very concerned about recent large increases in the frequency and numbers of people fleeing conflict zones, including women and children, and the human tragedies that befall those sometimes desperate attempts. Needless to say, the Republic of Haiti can particularly relate to the issue, and we welcomed the high-level meeting on the subject held at the beginning of this session. We hope that concrete decisions, equal to the magnitude of the tragedies and risks faced by displaced populations, can be taken to protect them. We also urge that substantial support be provided to help host countries. We believe it is vital to take every possible step to combat the traffickers who abuse the good faith of those fleeing poverty and misery.

The Haitian delegation is well aware of the growing number of our compatriots who are leaving the country in search of a better life elsewhere. We understand and have taken on board the legitimate concerns that have been expressed by representatives of some countries of destination or transit, some of them from this very podium. This human tragedy calls for specific decisions and measures that can offer the Haitian people new opportunities and better living conditions. To that end, we need peace, political stability, development-oriented infrastructure, entities that will help to strengthen the rule of law and a better understanding of the major socioeconomic challenges that we face. We have launched a dialogue with various host countries with the aim of finding shared solutions.

At this point, I would like to briefly paint a picture of the current situation in Haiti. In about two weeks, the Haitian people will go to the polls. The mandate that the National Assembly conferred on me at my election was unequivocal: restore Haitians' confidence in the electoral process, reinstate constitutional order by completing the electoral cycle begun in 2015 and hold fair, credible, transparent and democratic presidential and legislative elections. That is the task I have been

working on unceasingly for the past seven months. The inauguration of the new President of the Republic on 7 February 2017 will be the culmination of the process of renewing and strengthening Haiti's republican institutions. Make no mistake — without fair and credible elections, any hope of a peaceful political transition is a vain illusion. A smooth transition remains the prerequisite and foundation for political stability, consolidation of the rule of law, economic modernization and development.

It is crucial to ensure that the forthcoming elections are credible if we are to effectively break the cycle of instability and the political uncertainty that has dogged my country for too long. In upholding my commitment to the Haitian people, I have spared no effort to help to create the conditions and atmosphere that are essential to the proper conduct of the elections, and impartial observers have unanimously noted the progress we have made on restoring our institutions and constitutional order. Parliament is now up and running and will be fully functional after the elections. The elected mayors have gradually taken up their functions, and that process has gone sooothly..

The Government is deeply respectful of the independence and prerogatives of the Provisional Electoral Council in organizing the elections. In response to the people's expectations and following up on the recommendations of our Independent Electoral Evaluation and Verification Commission, the Council has made appropriate fixes to remedy the manifest deficiencies in the electoral machinery. These have been welcomed by every sector, including the candidates themselves and the national and international observers.

Voter confidence in the integrity of the electoral process is a major factor in citizens' participation and the legitimacy of both the election results and those elected. So far, the new Provisional Electoral Council, which I established in broad consultation with the country's driving forces, has demonstrated its ability to conduct the electoral process successfully. Despite dealing with various technical and logistical obstacles in circumstances of financial penury, the Government has shown its willingness to take on the financial burden of the elections. I am pleased to say that the process is on the right track.

While the elections are not an end in themselves, they represent a necessary transition. The legitimacy of the new Haitian authorities will depend on their success. The day after the elections, our country will need to feel a powerful wave of international solidarity. Our new leaders will need that solidarity in order to address our structural problems, to ensure that they do not end up undermining Haiti's efforts to emerge from underdevelopment and to enable them to tackle the colossal task of turning our economy around after decades of regression. They will need it in order to undertake the reforms that are essential to our economic and social modernization and in order to make the massive investment in our failing infrastructure and the training of the human resources that the country so desperately needs.

On behalf of the Haitian people, I take this opportunity to commend the immense efforts of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, whose mandate will soon be the subject of a Security Council resolution. The progress that has been made during the Mission's 12 years in Haiti may seem slow to many observers, but it is nonetheless real, especially in the areas of security, promotion of human rights and building the capacities of institutions that ensure the rule of law, particularly through the Mission's support to the Haitian national police and the judiciary.

This is also an opportunity for me to salute the great courage and leadership of the Secretary-General. At the end of his second term, I urge him to accept the idea that my country needs international understanding if it is to tackle the challenges of the lack of sanitation that continues to expose it to epidemic and endemic disease and illnesses from all sources. In recent years, my people have suffered tremendously from waves of infectious diseases such as malaria, cholera, Zika, chikungunya and dengue, among others. To overcome these scourges, declaration of good intent, comforting though they are, are of no effect and cannot yield results. We require real and effective sanitary support with respect to drinking water and waste treatment.

The renewed outbreak of cholera in recent months is one of the most acute challenges facing Haiti. It is a clear illustration of the perceptible deterioration in the humanitarian situation, as the Secretary-General stressed in a recent report to the Security Council (S/2016/753). In this connection, the Government of the Republic of Haiti has noted and welcomed the statements of the Secretary-General on two situations that have been discomforting for the United Nations: the many cases of sexual abuse perpetrated by peacekeepers, and the introduction of cholera to Haiti.

The recognition by the United Nations of its moral responsibility in the latter instance opens the way for real discussions as to the need to definitively end this pandemic, which affects many of my fellow citizens. Here we trust that the urgent appeal of the Secretary-General for a substantially strengthened programme to combat cholera and to provide material assistance to victims and their families will be heeded and will fully meet the expectations of the people of Haiti.

Haiti is once again at a crossroads. The immediate future of the country hangs on the success of the forthcoming elections, but so too does the road that the country will take in coming years. At this historic juncture, the people and the Government of Haiti attach the greatest importance to the solidarity of the international community and to the cooperation of the United Nations and its Member States to ensure the success of the forthcoming elections, which, we firmly believe, will mark a decisive stage in the lengthy process of consolidating democracy and bringing about the rule of law in our country.

As I conclude, I once again reaffirm that the people of my country have confidence in the United Nations and in the ideal of universal solidarity, of which the United Nations is the most lofty and constant embodiment. Through me, the people of Haiti reiterate once again their belief in our Organization's capacity to build peace in the world, increase cooperation among peoples and help deprived populations to take charge of their destiny in the context of a new international order that is more just, has a greater spirit of solidarity and is a harbinger of hope and opportunity for all, so that everyone can have the opportunity to enjoy its share of progress.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Acting President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jocelerme Privert, Acting President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media, and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media, and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media, and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media, and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Bettel (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): May I first of all congratulate Mr. Thompson on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I wish also to take this opportunity to thank his predecessor, whose outstanding work enabled us to modernize and render more transparent an entire series of processes, including that leading to the selection of future Secretaries-General of our Organization.

I also wish to commend the exemplary commitment of our Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, as his mandate and his decade of service to our Organization draws to a close. He has rightly stated, as fact and as an imperative, that we are the first generation that can put an end to poverty, and we are the last generation that can act so as to avoid the repercussions of unbridled climate change.

A year ago virtually to this day, we adopted, in this very Hall, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Today we must implement this ambitious universal programme and maintain the 2015 momentum. I therefore welcome the selection of the theme "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world" for this session of the Assembly. We must work to ensure that no one is left behind and that we can all can reap the benefits of sustainable, just and equitable development. The year 2015 was also marked by the adoption of the Paris Agreement, which Luxembourg strongly committed to during its presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The time has come to implement these international agreements and to ensure that the commitments that we

have made internationally and nationally bear fruit. We must chart a course to a sustainable future for coming generations.

Luxembourg is actively working to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and will be among those States ratifying the Paris Agreement at the end of the year. We must act in an inclusive manner, involving the various stakeholders and ensuring that our policies are consistent, particularly in the area of development, so that we can strike a balance between the economic, environmental and social pillars.

We must invest in education and health care. We must fight social inequality, ensure decent work for all and provide robust social protection systems.

The President returned to the Chair.

My country is among the seven countries that spend at least 0.7 per cent of gross national income on official development assistance; this has been the case since 2000. Official development assistance has an important role to play, but we must also mobilize other sources of funding. Faced with the relative decline in financial resources for development and humanitarian action, it is more urgent than ever to broaden the donor base.

The first World Humanitarian Summit, in which I had the honour to take part last May in Istanbul, made it possible to reassert the principles governing humanitarian action: humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. As a signatory to the grand bargain, Luxembourg will seek to increase the predictability and effectiveness of its humanitarian contributions through multi-year agreements. We also intend to strengthen aid by allocating 5 per cent of funding directly to local organizations by 2020.

Sharing, giving and helping are not words we hear much among many of my constituents these days. But are we aware of how fortunate we are? While in our country some parents must decide only if the dinner they will serve their children will be hot or cold, in other countries the question is, when will I be able to give my children some food?

The high-level meeting held earlier this week reminded us that the challenge posed by mass movements of refugees and migrants in recent months and years can be addressed only globally. In the second half of 2015, my country held the presidency of the Council of European Union. Migration was, unfortunately, at the centre of our concerns during the presidency. Personally, I have learned a few lessons from that experience. On the European level, solidarity and burden-sharing are also indispensable to a credible migration policy that includes border controls or respects the Dublin Regulation.

It is necessary to clearly distinguish between refugees in need of protection and irregular economic migrants. Most of the refugees in need of international protection have had to flee situations of war, sometimes, as in the case of Syria, through mass exoduses. The role of our Organization is crucial in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and the responsibility to protect civilian populations.

A large part of the migration towards European countries is also economic. One cannot treat with contempt those who, for themselves or for their loved ones, often embark on a long and dangerous journey. We cannot fail to welcome them, but it is difficult to accommodate all of them. At stake, as we know very well today, is the acceptance of our opinions. Populism is being nourished by the feeling that matters are not under control. Some people profit from the confused situation by exploiting it for their own purposes. When I hear, as I did again this week, a political candidate say that a refugee may be a terrorist, I condemn such statements in the firmest possible terms. That is because a person who has left his country is a victim of terrorism, not a perpetrator.

I believe that we need to keep the paths of legal migration open, not merely because developed countries, notably those in Europe, need them, but also because it would be mistaken and dangerous to declare an end to all migration. Migration, when it is controlled, can constitute an opportunity for everyone. We must, I think, provide sufficient development opportunities to avoid disorderly movements. The approach adopted at the European Union-Africa summit, held in Valletta in 2015, seems to me to be a good one. Europe has committed itself to strengthening assistance to its African partners with increased cooperation on migratory flows at the borders. In the view of my country, it is an additional effort and not challenging to the existing models of cooperation and assistance.

But what has happened since the Valletta Summit? The meetings provided an opportunity for dialogue, but it is essential to honour the commitments and to act. I think that the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 19 September can help to deal with all

those problems at an appropriate level: on the global level of our Organization. The population displacement has affected all regions of the world. It also affects those countries that are experiencing precarious situations for their own populations. As the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) invites us to do, we will actively participate in the work for the adoption in 2018 of a global compact on refugees and a global compact for safe, regular and orderly migration.

Armed conflict, the proliferation of weapons, the lack of development, violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism, threats posed by climate change, poor governance and violations of human rights continue to dominate the daily news. Terrorist attacks have shaken the Middle East and Africa, Europe, the United States and Asia. The effects of climate change manifest themselves in increasingly extreme weather patterns that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable States and populations, creating tension and unrest and pushing people to migrate to places they hope will be more clement. Armed conflicts persist or are likely to break out, endangering the survival of thousands of civilians, exposing them to violence, including sexual violence, and threatening their most basic rights.

The African continent remains particularly vulnerable to both internal and external challenges and shocks. I do not wish to recite a litany of ongoing or potential crises. Rather than give a gloomy account of current events, I want to comment on the remarkable development potential of the African continent. I am persuaded that, together, we can act so that peace can become a reality in South Sudan, Somalia, Libya and the Central African Republic. It is up to the parties to those conflicts to bring about their settlement, thereby reducing the suffering of the population and paving the way for sustainable development. The international community is ready to assist and support their efforts for the restoration and consolidation of peace.

Africa has formidable resources. In the first place, it has a pool of extraordinary talent represented by its youth. It is important to focus on education, health and job creation in the context of inclusive national development policies that make use of the human potential and natural resources of Africa. Such policies should aim to reduce poverty and inequality, reduce vulnerability to shocks and create countless prospects for the development and flourishing of the peoples.

Africa is a continent to which my country, Luxembourg, feels close because of strong ties developed over many years as a result of our development cooperation policy. That partnership is a work in progress and aims to meet the needs of the African countries. Its focus has become increasingly economic, in complement to efforts hitherto concentrated on social sectors.

The United Nations remains the place the international community chooses as the forum for addressing the many multidimensional crises and challenges our planet faces today. That is true of sustainable development. It is also the case in regard to combating terrorism. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy has established a political framework to combat terrorism while respecting human rights and individual freedoms. In that context, we welcome the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

We all must also open the eyes of some young people who in their past behaviour showed no such tendencies yet tomorrow want to fight against their own families. For what reason? Because of religion? Absolutely not. They flout and abuse Islam. They kill their own brothers and sisters. We must condemn such behaviour. No religion can condone such savagery. It is important to remind those young people that no reward awaits them. All they are doing is injuring their own religion.

The United Nations also plays a vital role in the maintenance of international peace and security, and a particular role is reserved for the Security Council. All too often, regrettably, the United Nations acts too late when a crisis has already erupted. We firmly endorse efforts to prevent crises or to avoid the recurrence of conflicts.

Luxembourg strongly supports the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative. Massive violations of human rights are often the first signs of a crisis about to worsen. Since its establishment in 2005, we have played an active part in the work and discussions of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, and we support the Peacebuilding Fund. The policy guidance and financial support provided by those entities have often been crucial in preventing the relapse of post-conflict countries into conflict, and they contribute to peacebuilding.

The adoption by the General Assembly and the Security Council this year of almost identical resolutions to bring about sustainable peace represents a paradigm shift. The resolutions put conflict prevention at the very heart of United Nations action, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, which highlights the need to take effective collective measures to prevent and avert threats to peace.

Luxembourg fully subscribes to the idea of moving from a post-conflict peacebuilding approach to one of sustaining peace. That includes activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, continuation or recurrence of a conflict, addressing the root causes and ensuring national reconciliation with a view to reconstruction and development. Such an approach, resolutely political, integrates the three pillars of action of the United Nations — human rights, peace and security, and development. It is inclusive and is characterized by national ownership of efforts to sustain peace, in conformity with the wishes of all members of society and with the ongoing support of the international community. We must turn these words into deeds. The General Assembly can count on Luxembourg in that regard.

If there is a conflict that should require us to redouble our efforts, it is the one in Syria. This conflict has given rise to an unprecedented movement of refugees towards neighbouring countries. Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are on the front line, then Europe and beyond. This situation is untenable. We must do everything possible to address this crisis as best we can, observing international law and welcoming and protecting refugees. We must do everything possible to put an end to this dreadful war that is destroying Syria and destabilizing the entire region. For more than five years, Syria has been martyred both by the brutal repression and atrocities carried out by the Al-Assad regime and by the abominable terrorist crimes committed by Da'esh and other terrorist groups that are rife in the country, profiting from a war economy and receiving external support.

The toll is terrible. The United Nations estimates that there have been more than 300,000 victims, including tens of thousands of children. An entire generation of children has been exposed to violence and death, deprived of fundamental freedoms, protection and education. Random air bombings and airdrops of barrels of explosives, the use of chemical weapons, violence and violations of international law continue without respite. Sieges are ongoing. Assistance is denied and impediments to humanitarian aid continue. Humanitarian convoys are deliberately targeted.

I take this opportunity to renew our appeal to the parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, to afford rapid, safe and unobstructed access by United Nations and humanitarian organizations throughout Syria. Even war has rules. And so long as the war lasts, we must demand and ensure that these rules and international humanitarian law are respected. Those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria, whatever they are, must be brought to justice, including before the International Criminal Court.

I commend the repeated efforts of the United States of America and Russia. They have led to a new agreement on cessation of hostilities that came into force 10 days ago. This fragile agreement was renounced by the Syrian army, then crippled by the unacceptable attack on a humanitarian convoy on 19 September. It must be respected and scrupulously observed.

The solution to the conflict in Syria can be achieved through a political transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in line with the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex) and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). The United Nations must play a determining role to facilitate negotiations among Syrians to bring about a political transition that should include all members of Syrian society.

On 4 February, I attendeded, with our Minister for Cooperation and Humanitarian Action, the London 2016 donors conference, entitled "Supporting Syria and the region". We will adhere to the commitment to provide €37.5 million between 2016 and 2020 to help the victims of the conflict in Syria and in neighbouring countries, with an emphasis on children's education, in particular by supporting the UNICEF programme "No lost generation".

Last week, I returned from a visit to Israel and Palestine. While the Syrian conflict is hitting the headlines, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a strong factor for destabilization in the Middle East. It is a catalyst for frustration and hatred that terrorist movements in the region feed on brazenly. We cannot resign ourselves to allowing this conflict to continue. The two-State solution is the only possible way of arriving at a sustainable settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The parameters of this solution are

well known and include the 1967 borders and Jerusalem as the capital of two States.

During my recent visit, I encouraged Israeli and Palestinian leaders to resume direct dialogue. If there is no movement, the international community must play its role. We also support initiatives such as those taken by France to organize an international conference to help the parties to resume negotiations in order to arrive at a two-State solution. We continue to believe that the negotiating format should be broadened, with increased participation of Arab and European countries. In addition, the role of the Security Council should be reactivated and a reasonable deadline for the conclusion of negotiations should be established.

Israel has the right to live in peace and security. The Palestinians have the right to a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State. The two go hand in hand. There is no alternative to coexistence, in peace and security. It is important for them to stop talking about each other and instead to talk to each other. Diplomacy can resolve the thorniest of problems. As proof of this, a comprehensive solution to the issue of Iranian nuclear weapons was reached last year.

We must remain vigilant when it comes to the implementation Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Nuclear non-proliferation efforts continue to be undermined by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The multiple ballistic missiles launched by North Korea and the recent North Korean nuclear test are in flagrant violation of the international obligations imposed on the country by Security Council resolutions. This provocative escalation is unacceptable. Apart from any Security Council measures that will be taken, the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear programme need to resume in order to bring about verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula by pacific means.

In all the areas I have touched upon, we recognize that the United Nations has a leading role to play. As a founding country of the United Nations, Luxembourg has based its foreign policy on its active participation in multilateral cooperation, a multilateralism that is rooted in respect for international law and cooperation among sovereign and equal States. Our commitment to strong and effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its heart, inspired us during our historic first term on the Security Council, in 2013-2014. This same commitment led my Government to propose Luxembourg as a candidate for a seat on the Security Council for a two-year term in 2031 and 2032. Our candidacy illustrates Luxembourg's resolve to continue to serve the United Nations as a responsible member of the international community, dedicated to the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

I shall leave New York this week with hope in my heart. The many speeches that we have heard in this Hall show that dialogue is possible. Our credibility is at stake. The world expects action, not words. Let us get to work!

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media, and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media, and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Filip (Republic of Moldova) (*spoke in Romanian; English text provided by the delegation*): I feel honoured to participate for the first time, as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, in the work of the General Assembly.

Let me start by warmly congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election. My delegation wishes you every success in your important mandate as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, our appreciation to Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his work as Secretary-General and his valuable efforts

aimed at redefining the role of the United Nations and adapting it to a world in continuous flux.

I would also like to thank the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for showing leadership and dedication during the previous session and for promoting an inclusive and transparent approach to the process of selecting a new Secretary-General. We believe that such an innovative approach should be used in future and that the criteria of equitable geographic representation should be formalized so as to allow all regional groups to have been represented in the highest elected post at the United Nations.

We call on all States Members of the United Nations, particularly members of the Security Council, to elect a Secretary-General from the Eastern European region, the only region that has not been represented in this high position despite its having put forward a number of qualified candidates. The issue of gender equality should be also considered in the selection process. We believe that a possible decision to elect a woman as the United Nations Secretary-General will have positive resonance with the growing international expectations in this regard.

The year 2016 has indeed been a difficult year for the Organization. Serious conflicts and crises have continued to have a negative impact on international peace, security and stability. We have witnessed new and tragic manifestations of conflict in various parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. All of us are deeply concerned by the ramifications and consequences of these conflicts, particularly the conflict in Syria.

International terrorism and various forms of violent extremism, fed by offensive ideologies, have continued to strike indiscriminately in countries everywhere, including Europe. The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism lay out the activities that need to be undertaken, individually and collectively, bearing in mind that some of their provisions complement our national legislation, in particular the law of the Republic of Moldova on countering extremist activities.

The Republic of Moldova welcomes the General Assembly high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants and the Leaders' Summit on Refugees held earlier this week. The two high-level meetings allowed the participating States and organizations to discuss principles and policies designed to address migration and the refugee crisis. We share the deep concern expressed about the challenges the international system is facing in this regard. The large movements of people, the scale of migration and the refugee crises, unprecedented since the Second World War, require a global humanitarian partnership capable of delivering the needed protection, as provided for by the international law.

In our view, it is important to bear in mind the complex nature of motives that drive people to move and to make a clear distinction among them. The solutions identified should be tailored to every individual situation, and a comprehensive global long-term solution should be outlined, one that goes beyond an ad hoc emergency response. In this context, we appreciate the indispensable contribution made by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which joins the United Nations system as a full-fledged agency pursuant to the Agreement concerning the Relationship between the United Nations and the IOM signed on 19 September. We must also fight smuggling and trafficking in persons in a comprehensive and resolute manner.

The Republic of Moldova also attaches critical importance to fostering development partnerships aimed at supporting countries in need of assistance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In our view, the United Nations development system is indispensable for forging such partnerships, including at the country level. We note with interest the progress achieved by those countries whose efforts to implement the SDGs are already under way. Many were presented at the 2016 High-level Political Forum held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, where the Republic of Moldova serves as a member.

The Moldovan Government, partnering with the United Nations Development Programme and other stakeholders, launched a process of localizing the SDGs and is currently working on putting in place a mechanism to measure progress in their implementation. For coordination and monitoring purposes, the National Coordination Council for Regional Development was established in July within the Office of the Prime Minister. To ensure synergy between the SDGs and the national development framework, we plan to review our national strategy for development, "Moldova 2020".

Mindful of the constraints in the current international environment — which is not promising in terms of increases in aid — we should look globally and nationally at ways to develop innovative sources of financing and increase the effectiveness of existing aid. The efforts of the Moldovan Government to increase aid effectiveness continue to be guided by the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Coordination with development partners in the Republic of Moldova in this area is based on the Partnership Principles Implementation Plan. We believe that through the effective use of resources, this institutionalized model of coordination and partnership will facilitate the gradual achievement of the SDGs in our country. In this context, I would also like to stress our interest in obtaining development financing and assistance for climate and disaster resilience, in the light of the climate-related vulnerabilities of our country.

We recognize climate-change risks and implications for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Republic of Moldova supported the negotiation and adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I take this opportunity today to inform the Assembly that the Republic of Moldova signed the historic Agreement at the recent treaty event, an action that will be followed soon by ratification of the Agreement by our Parliament.

Perhaps never before has there been such a clear correlation between migration, sustainable development and climate change, on the one hand, and peace and security, on the other. We cannot realistically expect to fulfil the 2030 Agenda in the absence of peace and security, just as peace and security will always be vulnerable in the absence of sustainable development.

The unprecedented increase in the number of regional and internal conflicts, the intensification of armed violence at the global level and the resurgent arms race are only a few ingredients that have fundamentally changed the international environment. International terrorism and all forms of violent extremism have continued to caused innocent human causalities and material losses everywhere, including in Europe. The horrific scenes of suffering and death in France, Belgium, Germany and many other countries, widely broadcast by the global media networks, show that these phenomena cannot be countered by military, political or economic means alone. We must look for solutions that will address rather than exacerbate the threat, based on a clear understanding of the factors that generate terrorism, fundamentalism, fanaticism and the new forms of violence.

We note with appreciation the Secretary-General's initiatives aimed at reforming the Organization to make it more effective. The Republic of Moldova welcomes the ongoing United Nations reform process, particularly regarding Security Council reform. Too often, that principal body has been criticized for its failure to maintain international peace and security. It is therefore essential to make it more efficient in discharging its primary responsibilities.

In our view, efficiency can be achieved by improving the Council's representativeness, legitimacy, transparency and accountability, as well as by restricting the right of veto on issues of substance, as provided for by the Charter of the United Nations. We expect the members of the Security Council, especially the permanent members, not only to react but to act preventively, promptly and impartially whenever peace and security are threatened, the principles of international law are disregarded or the sovereignty and integrity of the States Members of the United Nations are blatantly violated.

Under the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter, certain regional organizations have been entrusted by the United Nations with dealing with a number of conflicts that are not a principal focus of the Council's work. In our view, more systematic outreach to these regional organizations is needed. Steps should also be taken to increase their accountability, particularly in the case of protracted conflicts, when the situation is not improving or is even worsening over the years.

Lack of progress should prompt more direct involvement from the appropriate United Nations bodies. We believe that no conflict falls outside the purview of the United Nations, regardless of whether it is on the Security Council's agenda or not. In this context, we welcome the high-level event on strengthening the capabilities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a Chapter VIII organization, organized by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, at the margins of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, which allowed the participants to discuss issues relevant to the aforementioned considerations.

Accordingly, we appreciate the fact that the General Assembly agreed to include in its agenda

item 32, "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development". These unresolved conflicts — some, like the one in the Republic of Moldova, date back 25 years — continue to have a negative impact on the political, social and economic development of the GUAM States. The General Assembly's debates under this item do not, as some fear, undermine the existing mechanism to negotiate the settlement of these conflicts. On the contrary, the ongoing monitoring of the situation in the areas in question, along with a proactive approach by the United Nations, when necessary, can effectively address attempts aimed at changing the political borders of some GUAM States through methods that run counter to democracy and international law.

The Transnistrian conflict that the Republic of Moldova has endured for many years is, first and foremost, a product of the long-standing geopolitical interests associated with our region. External factors played a decisive role in igniting this conflict in the early 1990s. It was triggered shortly after the Republic of Moldova declared independence, on the very day our country was granted United Nations membership, 2 March 1992. Unlike other internal conflicts that are generated and fostered by ethnic and religious antagonisms, the Transnistrian conflict has a purely geopolitical character. In theory, that feature of the conflict makes it easier to resolve and therefore strengthens our conviction that it can be resolved through the resolute joint political efforts of all the parties involved.

The similar ethnic composition of the populations living on both sides of the Nistru river and their mutual lack of hatred or intolerance towards one another speak for themselves and illustrate both the artificial character of the Transnistrian entity and the falsity of its ideological and political tenets. The recurrent declarations by the exponents of the Transnistrian regime on the need to make the territory it controls a part of another country, with no common borders with Moldova, are not only unrealistic but also seriously undermine the settlement process.

Despite the many difficulties encountered in the settlement process, the Moldovan authorities are determined to find a political solution to the Transnistrian conflict, using the 5+2 negotiating format and based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, by way of granting special legal status to the Transnistrian region. We are firmly convinced that the only way to reach this goal is through negotiations. However, negotiations can succeed only if all the stakeholders show the needed political will, act in good faith and refrain from putting forward rigid preconditions in negotiating the political aspects of the settlement.

What is the right path to final settlement? We believe that the joint and resolute actions of all parties to the 5+2 settlement format on the basis of a common agenda and common objectives are what is required, as are enhanced confidence-building and the bringing together of the people on both banks of the river Nistru in all spheres of social and economic life. It will also entail the identification of solutions for topical issues and the engagement in serious and objective political discussions on the future of the Transnistrian region as an integral part of the Republic of Moldova. In addition, it will involve a firm commitment to maintaining stability and refraining from stoking tensions.

Only by acting in this way will we be able to stop and prevent the violation of human rights in the Transnistrian region, discourage unilateral destabilization and gradually create an environment of confidence and trust. That is the path the Moldovan authorities will continue to follow, which, hopefully, will deliver the desired result — a viable and comprehensive settlement of the Transnistrian conflict and the reintegration of the Republic of Moldova.

With respect to factors that have a negative impact on the political environment and regional security, I would like to reiterate our deep concern over the lack of progress in the withdrawal of Russian armaments and troops stationed on our territory without the prior consent of the Moldovan authorities, contrary to the provisions of the our Constitution. Likewise, we are deeply concerned about the increasing frequency of military exercises involving foreign troops, which are often conducted jointly with the military and paramilitary units of the Transnistrian regime.

The fragile security conditions in our region as a whole, amplified by the destabilizing factors in eastern Ukraine, require a constructive re-engagement of all States participating in the 5+2 settlement format, as well of other relevant or interested actors, particularly the OSCE and the United Nations, with a view to identifying as swiftly as possible responses and solutions for these long-standing problems, in conformity with

the international law. We expect the General Assembly to focus constructively on the Transnistrian and other protracted conflicts, particularly when it considers the annual resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE.

This year, the Republic of Moldova is celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of its independence. In that time, we have achieved many but not all of the objectives that we set for ourselves. We have nevertheless laid the foundations for a democratic society, based on European political, economic and social values. We are fully committed to the idea of European integration, which has become our national project, and our journey on that path is being guided by the Association Agreement we concluded with the European Union. The Republic of Moldova is currently in a period of transition, during which our main priorities are the reforms that should facilitate our country's modernization and enhance its institutions. The Government that I am privileged to lead is determined to finalize ongoing, meaningful reforms and will rely on the support of external partners in that critical endeavour.

During the past 25 years as a State Member of the United Nations, Moldova has shared the common values, responsibilities, achievements and setbacks of the Organizations. On this occasion, I would like to reiterate the Republic of Moldova's commitment to the United Nations and its strong desire to cooperate with all States Members of the United Nations with a view to fulfilling the noble purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): The General Assembly at its seventy-first session holds special significance for Samoa and the Pacific region. At the helm of the General Assembly for the first time ever is a Pacific Islander and diplomat from Fiji, His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson. The Pacific is often considered a region of peace and tranquillity, but such credit belies the diverse and enormous challenges that we face daily, as a group and as island States. The focus of your presidency, Sir, on the collective implementation of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is therefore a timely and fitting catalyst to help transform our region's numerous challenges into real and lasting opportunities. Samoa congratulates you on your election as President of the General Assembly and lends its full support to the agenda that will guide our work during your tenure.

This general debate is the Secretary-General's final one before he steps down after a decade of service to the cause of humankind. From Samoa's perspective, Mr. Ban Ki-moon has been, and continues to be, a true champion of and persistent advocate for issues that are of immense significance to small island developing States (SIDS). His passionate leadership on climate change — the undisputed priority concern of every Pacific island country and territory — has endeared him to the Pacific region. Equally memorable is the rare distinction he holds as the only Secretary-General in the 71-year history of the United Nations who has ever visited the Pacific region twice during his term of office. That is no mean feat, given the constraints of isolation and travel.

In September 2011, the Secretary-General attended the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders summit in New Zealand, visiting Solomon Islands and Kiribati along the way. There he witnessed at first hand both the scars and excessive damage to the physical landscape and coastlines caused by climate change, on the one hand, and, on the other, the resilience and sheer determination of Pacific peoples on the front lines of climate change to ensure the survival of some of the islands and their continued existence as sovereign nations.

Later, in 2014, Samoa's isolation and lack of political clout in the global arena were bridged when Mr. Ban Ki-moon, together with the entire Chief Executive Board, visited to attend the United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States hosted by Samoa on behalf of the Pacific region. On his arrival Mr. Ban was welcomed as "His Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations". A few days later on his departure, he was fondly bid farewell as *"Afioga Tupua* Ban Ki-moon", after he was conferred the princely title of *Tupua*. Such events are now a memorable part of our history. The close rapport between the Secretary-General and our region was further evidenced this morning when Pacific leaders met with him as part of our yearly meetings in New York — a much-anticipated event, which has become an annual feature of our September calendar.

I would like to add that as this chapter in the Secretary-General's and Samoan chief's life of service to multilateralism draws to a close, we thank him for his principled leadership and robust advocacy with regard to issues that affect and have an impact on our islands and peoples personally and directly. We wish him well in his future calling and trust that his successor will embrace and continue his legacy, especially in the context of climate change and the much anticipated Paris Agreement, which is about to enter into force. Should he find that prospects are hard to come by, he should remember that he has the *Tupua* dominion in Samoa.

Last year, we agreed on a number of global agendas, outcomes and agreements. They represent our hopes for solutions to address the issues before our Assembly, ranging from sustainable development to climate change, from disaster-risk resilience to development financing and from humanitarian challenges to peace and security. Collectively, they represent the totality of our needs and priorities, including the means to achieve them. Every issue is important and all are interconnected. None should be considered to be subordinate to any another, to be marginalized, abandoned or sidelined. They deserve to be implemented through an all-inclusive approach to ensure that they will be addressed and treated equally. Only then can one say with some level of comfort that, in the implementation of our new sustainable agenda, no one will be left behind.

That is the backdrop and the reality against which the world is anxiously awaiting the selection of Mr. Ban Ki-moon's successor in the task of steering the United Nations during the critical implementation phase of our inspirational goals. It is a mammoth task, but not an impossible one.

As the search for a new Secretary-General is gaining momentum, an appointment appears imminent. Yet in this all-important process, Samoa, like others, is largely a bystander and an observer — not by choice, but by design. Like the majority of Member States, Samoa hopes that the current selection practice will be reformed soon to give the wider membership a more active role in selecting who the head of their Organization should be. We can only hope for the institutionalization of best practices.

Samoa expects the new Secretary-General to be independent and not beholden to the priorities and influences of those who will sanction the appointment. The Secretary-General should treat each and every Member State equally and accord the same level of attention and priority to their issues and concerns, regardless of their size, political influence or economic might. We look forward to welcoming and working closely with the new appointee. We are confident that new leadership will usher in a spring of hope that will provide a tailored and fit-for-purpose Secretariat for the challenging task at hand. Only in true partnership can Member States and the Secretariat work in concert to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We are greatly encouraged by the demonstrable commitment and political will to transform the Paris Agreement on Climate Change into reality and that it is poised to enter into force sometime soon. That is a welcome and positive development, especially from the perspective of all island nations, given the extent to which impacts of climate change are already being felt. When cyclones and natural disasters are happening more frequently and with greater intensity in our part of the world, as witnessed recently in Vanuatu and Fiji, the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement is everyone's top priority. As vulnerable small island developing States, we cannot afford to lose the hard-earned gains of many years. We applaud the leadership shown by Member States that have ratified the Paris Agreement or pledged to do so soon so that it can enter into force in record time.

The science of climate change is quite clear and unequivocal. The political will to accelerate the early

operationalization of the Paris Agreement is now evident. But signing and ratifying the climate agreement are the easy and early achievables. Delivering on promises and making good on commitments and undertakings pledged are the seal of true leadership. We need to match the political will with the provision of adequate resources that are easily accessible so that the climate pledges already submitted to the United Nations can be used to facilitate early implementation of all efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions without delay.

The coordinated management and utilization of the Global Environment Facility, the Adaptation Fund and the newly established Green Climate Fund, as well as the complementarity offered by other funding sources, both private and public, will become all the more critical in the implementation phase. The challenge has been raised for the Green Climate Fund and other funding institutions to assist small island developing States in accessing resources through a streamlined and simplified project cycle and approval process.

Addressing climate change is everyone's responsibility, not a monopoly reserved solely for Governments. In 2015, we boldly declared a shared commitment to stronger global efforts to ensure that all people have a right to live in dignity, free from want and fear. The Sustainable Development Goals were not just visionary goals or mere aspirations; they are designed to provide for basic human needs of all people in an achievable manner within our lifetime. Our optimism was rooted in a culture of shared responsibility and a belief in humankind. Achieving the SDGs will not be easy without the support of our development partners. Sustainable development requires sustained efforts and commitment. Partnerships with the donor community require mutual trust and understanding.

The 2030 Agenda integrating the three pillars of sustainable development is not just a preferable option: it is the only option. Samoa volunteered to report on its implementation of the new global agenda during this year's high-level political forum on sustainable development, less than a year after the Agenda was adopted. In addition to offering to share its experience with the wider United Nations membership, Samoa was also eager to benefit and learn from the experiences of the other 21 States that were reviewed.

The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway is an integral part of our wider 2030 Agenda. It represents a dedicated road map for SIDS to make the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the SDGs and for the eventual achievement of the 17 new Goals. Our new Agenda highlights partnerships as an important part of Sustainable Development Goal 17; indeed, partnerships are the very means of implementation. With the SIDS Partnership Framework already launched, it is important that all SIDS development partners and United Nations agencies are actively and constructively engaged and that the platform continues to be supported, monitored and reported on regularly.

Different partnership modalities will be forged from time to time, depending on SIDS priorities. There can be the traditional North-South cooperation, the emerging South-South cooperation, the well-tested triangular cooperation or even the novel SIDS-SIDS partnerships. Importantly, every partnership matters. When one belongs to the United Nations group with special challenges and vulnerabilities in the context of sustainable development, all options should be open for consideration. The SIDS Partnership Framework and the Steering Committee provide the platform from which new partnerships will emerge through outreach initiatives and coordination to ensure that all partners involved work together cooperatively and in a cohesive manner to meet SIDS development needs.

Oceans and seas have a fundamental role to play in contributing to global prosperity, from regulating climate to providing food security for billions of people. They are an important source of employment and income for many communities around the world. The sustainable management of oceans and seas is therefore critical for economic and social development and poverty eradication and for raising living standards worldwide.

Yet the health of the oceans is increasingly compromised by the pressures of overfishing, climate change, ocean acidification, habitat loss and pollution. As the health of the marine ecosystems declines, so too does their capacity to provide food, livelihoods and incomes. These impacts disproportionately affect our island countries, which are the most vulnerable and least able to adapt. And if the trends continue, critical thresholds may soon be reached, with potentially dire consequences for our islands' food security, incomes and livelihoods.

It was against the backdrop of mounting challenges and a sense of pessimism in the light of the fragmentation

of United Nations discussions on ocean issues that the Pacific small island developing States championed the push for oceans to be a stand-alone goal in the new set of Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 14 is now the dedicated Goal on oceans. Last week's third Our Ocean conference, hosted by the United States Government and under the leadership of Secretary of State John Kerry, and the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held in June 2017, are welcome efforts at the global level to address some of our emerging concerns. The start of the preparatory process to develop an international, legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction is a positive development — a step in the right direction — in which the Pacific islands are participating very actively.

The world is a powerless witness to the tragedy of people fleeing from their countries to avoid being mired in the destruction of war and terrorism. Obviously, a credible and long-term response is needed to address this grave crisis that has cost so many innocent lives and affected so many people. Individual actions by States cannot in themselves lead to a solution. We must all shoulder the responsibility of collectively meeting the threat through concerted multilateral action, consistent with the spirit that underlies the Organization. Ideally, this effort must start in the Security Council, which is entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining world peace.

It is in that conviction that Samoa calls on the Security Council to address the threat posed by the recent actions of North Korea to the peace and stability of the Asia and Pacific region, if not the whole world. Imagine how easily achievable some if not all of the 17 SDGs would be if all the resources spent on futile wars were instead diverted for the much-needed economic and social activities that are so necessary for the creation of a peaceful society.

Our world has enjoyed peace and security for 70 years by faithfully observing and following the Charter of our Organization. World leaders with the power and authority to end wars have the moral duty and responsibility to ensure that our people continue to live in peace and harmony for many more years to come. In their reflective wisdom, our leaders have reaffirmed their faith in a strengthened and reformed United Nations as a vital multilateral institution that can respond effectively and ably to the challenges of the twenty-first century and deliver on the Millennium Declaration.

Samoa supports an enlarged Security Council in both membership categories to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. The case for democratic practices and transparency in the Security Council's procedures and working methods in order to facilitate a more engaged and effective relationship with the General Assembly remains a compelling one. On the other hand, the Assembly must work hard to regain the confidence of the world in its status as the highest representative decision-making body of the Organization.

Let me now pay homage to the selfless work performed by the men and women in the Blue Helmets serving in various peacekeeping operations, some of whom have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Samoa will continue to provide civilian policemen and policewomen as its tangible contribution to such a noble cause.

Mr. Braun (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let us remember that the strength of our Organization lies in our numbers and our diverse membership. We must rise above the confines of national interests and work to benefit from the diverse richness of our membership. Let us capitalize on our unity in diversity and set aside our differences so that, as nations united, we can be the vanguard for the good of humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): "None of us acting alone can achieve success." These are the words of Nelson Mandela. We must decide and act together because only together can we come up with right responses to the many challenges that we face. Our responsibility is to offer every child — boy or girl — the keys to his or her own emancipation. Every man, every woman, wherever they are born, bears universal rights. They must be able to learn, to work, to care for themselves and to raise their children in peace and security. Technological, medical and social progress must be shared. It must not belong to a privileged few. That must be our commitment and our common goal.

We know the path by which we can reach such a goal. It has been embodied since 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The universal values are a beacon that must shed an immutable light on the path of humankind. There should be no exception, no compromise and no renouncement of the respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

And yet, let us look at the truth. Equality between women and man is not always a fact of life. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are too often flouted. Homophobia, in some countries, has even been legalized, sometimes even through recent laws. In addition, too often, the rule of law is a smokescreen and justice is not a remedy but a threat to citizens and businesses.

The African continent overflows with strengths and talents. Its potential is immense. The histories of Europe and Africa are intrinsically linked and, of course, we share a future. It is vital that we all mobilize to encourage and support Africa's development, first of all, through more fairly apportioned economic growth and the emergence of a middle class. I support the creation of a genuinely equal, win-win partnership with Africa, based neither on nostalgia or guilt.

I firmly believe, as history has always shown, that strengthened democratic rights and personal freedoms always go hand in hand with development and the improvement of people's living conditions. In the past few years, Africa has seen several successful democratic transitions, due above all to those citizens who have participated in their political and electoral processes and thereby solidified their democratic institutions and sovereignty.

Unfortunately, some citizens are still too often deprived of the fundamental right to elect those who are supposed to represent them. In the words of John F. Kennedy, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." An honest election is a peaceful revolution, because the only legitimate Government is an elected one. Respect for the requirements of the rule of law, and therefore of a country's constitution, is the only possible way to ensure stability and democratic harmony. The people of Burundi have been denied that right, resulting in discord, division and even oppression. The only solution to that crisis is a genuinely inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue conducted under international mediation and in accordance with the Arusha Peace Agreement.

It is crucial that elections be held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and all doubts surrounding them removed. I firmly condemn all the violence that we have witnessed there, including in the past few days in Kinshasa. Those who exercise authority must assume their full and individual share of responsibility. I want to be very clear here. We respect the principles of sovereignty and independence, but on the condition that sovereignty does not become a smokescreen for abusing the rule of law and violating fundamental freedoms. I appeal to the country's political leaders both in the majority and the opposition to avoid an escalation. There should be a broad, inclusive dialogue. They should be equal to their country and people. They should not hide their faces. The only path to stability is by establishing, as soon as possible, a definite date for holding honest, credible elections.

At this point, we must admit that the situation in Syria constitutes a continuing failure for the international community. It is a country torn apart by unspeakable suffering, where massive numbers of refugees have been uprooted from their homes. We cannot accept the notion that the chaos in Syria serves the long-term geostrategic interests of Syrians, or their future. We cannot accept that one man's bloody obduracy stands in the way of a political solution and peace. We support Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and urge all the permanent members of the Security Council to show that they have a sense of responsibility. We would also like to remind them that there can be no impunity for violations of international humanitarian law.

With Da'esh, as with Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, what we are dealing with is in fact a new totalitarianism. At question are fanaticism and the negation of human life itself. They want to destroy freedom. They have chosen the path of barbarism and terror. Like many others, my country suffered a tragic blow from them, last March. The fight we must wage against terrorism must be a shared one, uncompromising and intransigent. Naturally, we support the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). But we must do more and better, systematizing our exchanges of information and intelligence in order to anticipate and prevent such barbaric acts. Freedom must be stronger than the shadows.

Around the world, there are 65 million women and men who are either refugees or displaced. Countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are on the front lines as hosts to huge numbers of refugees, with all the difficulties that entails. Every continent is involved, and we know what the causes are: war, poverty, climate change. Needless to say, peace and development are the best responses we can make, and we must also ensure the dignity of every human being, with special concern for those who are most vulnerable — women and children.

Political dialogue and international negotiations are tedious processes, too often slow and strewn with obstacles, with as many steps backward as forward. That often results in frustration and sometimes even a feeling of powerlessness. And yet I believe firmly that inclusive, stubborn, tenacious political dialogue is the surest way to finding lasting solutions. And we should also highlight international diplomacy's successes. The peace agreement between the Colombian authorities and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, the formation of a Government in Libya, the nuclear agreement with Iran, the diplomatic rapprochement between Cuba and the United States and the fight against Ebola are all examples of progress and success, holding a key to a better and safer life for millions.

How true is the saying, often attributed to Nelson Mandela, that a winner is a dreamer who never gives up. I too believe that courage and tenacity are key to advancing peace and ensuring a more secure, more just world. We should never lose hope or abandon ourselves to fatalism.

The situation in Israel and Palestine today is yet another illustration of the urgency and importance of reviving the political process in order to arrive at a definitive solution to the conflict. We support a two-State solution, but in the current circumstances, if no fundamental change is made, we know that this prospect may be irretrievably lost.

We should put a stop to the acts that hinder such a solution. We condemn the continued settlement activities in the occupied territories. At the same time, we are firmly committed to maintaining Israel's security, which must be guaranteed. We support France's initiative aimed at facilitating the resumption of talks. In another essential step, the Palestinians must also advance their own dialogue.

International law cannot be reduced to the law of the jungle. On the frontiers of Europe, the territorial integrity of several countries has been violated by one country alone. It is not acceptable to fan the flames of conflict in order to soothe nostalgic feelings of grandeur. I urge that we work to find a way out of this logic of confrontation with Russia. We have too many interests in common to allow ourselves the luxury of diplomatic paralysis.

In the past few years we have made a lot of progress in reducing poverty and improving access to basic health care. But we know very well that there is still so much to do. The Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change have given us a proactive framework to continue making progress, and we should strive unstintingly to implement them. It is our duty to future generations to create a safer world that is more respectful of our planet.

Economic exchanges and international trade contribute to worldwide growth and employment. Free enterprise, the private finance initiative and economic exchanges are the foundations of development: they fuel research, technological innovation and even medical progress. We must promote transparency in the fiscal and banking sectors and fight all forms of corruption. Capitalism is not naturally virtuous: just and transparent rules are necessary. However, in many countries employees are not properly compensated for their work. Capitalism is not an end in itself, but an instrument that we must put to use at the service of human development: no more, no less.

The global economic situation is constricting State budgets. Work is often too heavily taxed in

comparison to other sources of revenue. For that reason, Belgium, along with 10 other countries of the European Union, would like to develop a system to tax financial transactions. We must succeed in removing the technical and political obstacles. It is a question of elementary equity.

It is an honour for my country to defend the universal principles and values of liberty, tolerance and dialogue. We fully respect the traditions, cultures and identities of the various peoples of the world, and we believe that universal values are the shared foundation of a fairer and safer world. We believe in the virtues of multilateralism and the persistent search for consensus through political dialogue.

Belgium is an active, stable and loyal member of the international community. For that reason, we are a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2019-2020 period. I sincerely hope that we can count on the support of a large number of countries in that election.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his commitment to peace and security. His intelligence and creativity have meant that he leaves behind a solid legacy. I already have high hopes for his successor, who will, we hope, ensure the proper implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

A politician concerns himself with the next election, whereas a statesman concerns himself with the future of the next generation. Let us strive to meet the expectations of our citizens, fulfil our universal values and act as statesmen.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Rodrigues and National Development Unit of the Republic of Mauritius

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Rodrigues and National Development Unit of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Rodrigues and National Development Unit of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Rodrigues and National Development Unit of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Jugnauth (Mauritius): It pleases me at the outset to convey my heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I also seize this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his exemplary stewardship of the Organization as Secretary-General throughout the past decade. As he leaves office at the end of this year, I wish him the very best in his future endeavours. He will be remembered for the rich legacy that he is leaving behind.

Last year, the Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, setting new benchmarks that will shape our future. We acknowledged the importance of every Goal, every target and every indicator as steps towards a better world. Our collective response and our solidarity in the face of the challenges that will arise as we try to carve out a sustainable world will determine whether we succeed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Each country has its priorities and will need to formulate a unique set of actions in order to achieve the universal goals that we have set for ourselves.

In that context, the United Nations will have an important role to play in supporting the efforts of individual countries. In Mauritius, we have chosen to focus our attention primarily on the eradication of extreme forms of poverty. My Government, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, has already undertaken to establish a social register of those living in dismal conditions and who require targeted measures and assistance.

As a first unprecedented measure, we have introduced in this year's national budget a subsistence allowance for the extreme poor based on a threshold of 2,720 Mauritian rupees per adult. That threshold is 40 per cent higher than the World Bank International

Extreme Poverty Line of of $3.10 per day per individual, calculated on the basis of purchasing power parity.

There are yet many miles to go, and we will resolutely pursue our journey towards attaining all of the SDGs by working together with the private sector and civil society. We are fully committed to creating a more equitable system, to safeguarding rule of law and to ensuring equal access to justice for all, as encapsulated in Goal 16 on peace and justice. The United Nations will be tested in the effort to achieve Goal 16 on an international scale, for we are conscious of the power of 'Might against right'. Nevertheless, Mauritius will persevere in its fight for the vulnerable.

For a small island developing State like ours, Goal 13 on climate action and Goal 14 on the oceans are of paramount importance for our survival. We are pleased that we have now crossed the first threshold for the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The 60 countries that have ratified the Agreement are responsible for 47.76 per cent of global emissions. For small island developing States (SIDS), the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement is of paramount importance.

The tourism industry in SIDS faces particular challenges owing to the negative effects of global warming. Taking measures to reverse that trend is essential to us in order to preserve marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity, and to foster the clean and sustainable use of our oceans. Mauritius will ensure that the steps it takes to advance its ocean economy are in synergy with sustainability principles.

In that context, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that on 1 and 2 September Mauritius, with the support of the World Bank, hosted the African Ministerial Conference on Ocean Economies and Climate Change. The Mauritius Communique, which encapsulates the outcome of the Conference, will serve as an input for the Green Climate Fund Africa Dialogue to be held next month in Cape Town. Mauritius will also contribute to the discussions at the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa, scheduled for 15 October in Togo, and at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, from 7 to 18 November, in Morocco.

Let me highlight the fact that during the Conference in Mauritius, African Ministers, along with our development partners — in particular the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations — agreed that a technical and financial assistance package is imperative in order to support ocean economies and ensure the resilience of oceans and coastal areas to climate change. We look forward to the adoption of such a package at the Climate Change Conference in Morocco.

Addressing the causes and effects of climate change will require robust determination and strong political will, as well as extraordinary means, in terms of both financing and technology transfer. We highly appreciate the pledges made by countries such as France and Canada to provide financing to fight climate change. However, access to those resources needs to be simplified and needs to take into account the specific circumstances of individual countries.

Two days ago, Mauritius and the Commonwealth Secretariat signed a host country agreement for the establishment in Mauritius of a Climate Finance Access Hub, as had been decided at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Malta in November 2015. The Hub will help small island developing States and least developed countries to unlock critical climate funds.

All our efforts to make our planet sustainable and to leave a proud legacy for future generations will be in vain if we are unable to maintain peace and security in the world and if we do not adhere to the invaluable principles of the rule of law and democracy. That is why Mauritius vehemently condemns, without reservation, the multiple acts of terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms.

We believe that a reformed United Nations, including a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, is essential to the global capacity to respond effectively to terrorist threats and new situations. An enlarged and more representative Security Council will further strengthen the United Nations role in furthering peace and security and the rule of law across the globe. Mauritius adheres to the African position on the reform of the Security Council, as elaborated in the Ezulwini Consensus. We believe that the historical injustice done to Africa with regard to representation on the Council should be redressed. We also support a dedicated seat for SIDS. In addition, Mauritius fully supports India's aspiration to a permanent seat.

While the formal recognition of Palestine by the United Nations as an observer is a very positive development, we must exert relentless efforts to work towards the goal of having two distinct, independent, secure and viable States, Palestine and Israel, living peacefully side by side.

The firm belief of Mauritius in the Charter of the United Nations and in the legitimacy of a fair and just multilateral system is unshakable. Every nation has a right to peace, justice, the rule of law and democracy, and every human being has the right to basic human rights. That is the basis on which the Mauritius Constitution is built. Those are also the principles enshrined in the Charter. The full realization of those principles will not be possible, however, unless complete decolonization is accomplished.

It was 48 years ago that my country became a free and sovereign nation, an independent country in the eyes of the world. Yet even today, it is unable to exercise its sovereignty over parts of its territory, namely, the Chagos Archipelago and Tromelin Island. On 8 November 1965, prior to granting Mauritius its independence on 12 March 1968, the United Kingdom illegally excised the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius, purportedly in order to create the so-called British Indian Ocean territory. That excision was carried out in violation of international law and General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, 2232 (XXI) of 20 December 1966, and 2357 (XXII) of 19 December 1967.

Resolution 1514 (XV) stipulates that any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It clearly prohibits the dismemberment of any colonial territory prior to independence. In addition to excising that integral part of our territory, the Mauritians living in the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly evicted from their home and moved to the main island of Mauritius in total disregard for their human rights. The Government of Mauritius is fully sensitive to their plight and their rightful aspiration to resettle in the Chagos Archipelago, as per their legitimate right as citizens of Mauritius. We are determined to resettle those who were forcibly evicted from the Archipelago upon its return to the effective control of Mauritius, in full respect of all their rights and dignity.

My delegation includes the spokesperson for Mauritians of Chagossian origin. He represents a whole community whose human rights have been flouted. His presence also testifies to the fact that the issue of sovereignty and the right of return of Mauritian Chagossians to their native lands cannot be dissociated. Mauritius has consistently protested against the illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago and has unequivocally maintained that the Chagos Archipelago, including the island of Diego Garcia, forms an integral part of its territory, under both Mauritian law and international law. Mauritius has also consistently pressed for the completion of the decolonization process.

For decades, Mauritius has called on the former colonial Power to engage with us in order to find a fair and just solution, but our efforts have been in vain so far. Despite the blatant violation of resolution 1514 (XV), the United Kingdom maintains that its continued presence in the Chagos Archipelago is lawful. Yet the United Kingdom also tacitly admits the impropriety of its action in dismembering the territory of Mauritius, as evidenced by the undertaking which it has given on various occasions that the Chagos Archipelago will be returned to Mauritius when no longer required for defence purposes.

That undertaking has been held to be legally binding by the arbitral tribunal established in the case brought by Mauritius against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to challenge the legality of the marine protected area purportedly established by the United Kingdom around the Chagos Archipelago. However, the United Kingdom has not honoured that undertaking so far. It keeps changing the criteria, which rely on the contention that the use of the Chagos Archipelago is still required for defence purposes.

The arbitral tribunal ruled that the creation of the purported marine protected area around the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom was in violation of international law. Two of the arbitrators found that the excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 showed a complete disregard for the territorial integrity of Mauritius by the United Kingdom, in violation of the right to self-determination, and that the United Kingdom is not the coastal State in relation to the Chagos Archipelago. That finding was not contradicted by the other two members of the arbitral tribunal.

The General Assembly has a direct institutional interest in the matter, given the historic and central role that it has played in the process of decolonization throughout the world. The Assembly has a continuing responsibility to complete the process of decolonization, including that of Mauritius. That is why, at the request of the Government of Mauritius, the General Assembly has included in the agenda of its seventy-first session item 87, "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965". An advisory opinion would assist the Assembly in its work on decolonization in general and the decolonization of Mauritius in particular, pursuant to the requirements of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

I would like to insist on the fact that the decision to have recourse to that action was not taken with an adversarial intent. This is not the first time that an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice is being sought on such a subject. In our view, the procedure represents a legitimate recourse, and it abides by the provisions of the Charter and past practice of the United Nations. We have noted that the United Kingdom has now expressed the wish to engage in dialogue with Mauritius in order to sort the matter out by June 2017. Mauritius has always believed in true dialogue. We are acting in good faith, and we expect the same from our interlocutors.

We believe that the Assembly has the duty to assist in the completion of the decolonization process. Mauritius is of the view that an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in respect of the Chagos Archipelago will undoubtedly assist the Assembly in the discharge of that responsibility. I wish to heartily thank member States of the African Union, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, the Non-Aligned Group, and the Group of 77 and China, among others, which have openly expressed their support to my country. I know that when it comes to justice, human dignity and territorial integrity, the Assembly will live up to its mission. We concur with the position of the United Kingdom on a rule-based international system. However, we have to be coherent, not only in what we say, but also in what we do.

The decolonization of Mauritius will also not be fully resolved until the issue of Tromelin is settled. We have had very constructive dialogue with France, and we urge France to pursue that dialogue with Mauritius for the early resolution of the dispute over the island in the continued spirit of friendship that has characterized the relationship between our two countries.

(spoke in French)

Territorial integrity is a principle of international law. The United Nations recognizes it as such, it is therefore our duty to ensure that it is respected.

(spoke in English)

To conclude, I would like to call on the entire membership of the United Nations to stand by the right to justice, to show that a better and safer world is possible only when it is compatible with the rule of law, and to show commitment to the principles of the Charter.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Rodrigues and National Development Unit of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Rodrigues and National Development Unit of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on his Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: Last year, from this same rostrum, at the seventieth anniversary session of the General Assembly, much was said concerning the critical turning point in world development. The keynote was the recognition that humankind is moving from a bipolar and monopolar world order towards multipolar and democratic systems of international relations with regard to dealing with common challenges and threats, which we can overcome only through joint efforts. It was rightly stressed that there is a need to change the very philosophy of inter-State communication by avoiding attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of States or to impose development models on countries and peoples.

Unfortunately, despite having acknowledged that fact, many Western countries continue to favour their entrenched ideas of mentoring, dominance, exclusiveness and the realization of self-interests by any means, rather than promote just and equitable

cooperation. We see, in the bloodshed in the Middle East and North Africa, the consequences of such arrogance and their sense of infallibility in their pushing forward unilateral and reckless solutions to complex conflicts. As a result, the foundations of world stability are being destroyed. It is high time to draw the necessary lessons and avoid sinking into catastrophe in Syria.

Largely thanks to Russia's military response and assistance at the request of the legitimate Government of Syria, it has been possible to prevent the collapse of that country's statehood and the disintegration of the country under the onslaught of terrorists. Our involvement provided the impetus for the establishment of the International Syria Support Group, which seeks to start a meaningful political process so that the Syrians themselves can determine the future of their country through an inclusive dialogue among all ethnic and religious groups. That is uncontestable. It has been acknowledged in the relevant Security Council resolutions and is enshrined in the recent agreements between Russia and the United States as Co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group. We thank everyone who has supported us in those efforts.

It is now essential to prevent the collapse of those agreements and to carry out an unbiased and impartial investigation into the incidents in Deir ez-Zor and Aleppo, which undermine the agreements, especially given that there are quite a few people wishing to sabotage both the agreements and a settlement of the conflict in Syria. It is crucial to comply with the demand of the Security Council to separate what is known as the moderate opposition from the terrorists. And, in that regard, a particular responsibility lies with the United States and the members of the United States-led coalition.

If we truly wish to resolve the Syrian crisis and the appalling humanitarian situation there, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Jabhat al-Nusrah and associated extremist groups must be suppressed. That is key to reaching a cessation of hostilities and national reconciliation. Today, it is unpardonable to put off intra-Syrian negotiations, as well as to impose preconditions to them. Everything must be done in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

Sabotaging the process — in particular through the use of external forces, including their advisers and supporters — has a negative impact on the reputation of the United Nations and leads us to believe that the reason for it lies in an attempt to change the regime. We have seen that sort of zero-sum game in Ukraine, which is very close to us, in the unconstitutional attempts to overthrow the Government and now in Ukraine's refusal to fulfil the Minsk Agreement of 12 February 2015. By and large, the attempt to use those conflicts to achieve self-serving geopolitical goals has been obvious to everyone.

The latest meeting of the International Syria Contact Group gives us reason to remain very cautiously optimistic. More broadly, it is only through the genuine implementation of all agreements that we will be able to have, in the Euro-Atlantic area, equal and indivisible security for mutually beneficial cooperation, as was stated at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe nearly 20 years ago.

Neither NATO nor the European Union will be able to replace a truly collective unification of efforts in the interest of all without losers and winners. And it is also utterly unacceptable to hold athletic competitions — which have always brought peoples together, strengthening friendship and mutual trust — hostage for reasons of political ambition. Attempts to manipulate the outcome of competitions does not honour those who flaunt their allegiance to fair competition but actually violate the General Assembly principles supporting the independence and autonomy of sports.

In today's world, we cannot be guided by the philosophy of the anti-heroes of George Orwell's dystopic novel *Animal Farm*, where all animals are equal but some are more equal than others. In the enlightened twenty-first century, it is simply indecent to adopt the role of mentor to everyone else, reserving for oneself the right to use doping in sports, launch unilateral adventures bypassing the United Nations, conduct geopolitical experiments that cost millions of human lives, engage in the extraterritorial blackmail of everyone, including one's closest allies, while what is really intended is to advance one's own financial profit, or even to set the criteria for the greatness of a particular country. All of that is unworthy of the principles of freedom and equality, on the basis of which great nations have grown and which are now being used by their elites to threaten the entire world.

This year, we mark the seventieth anniversary of the Nuremberg Tribunal decisions. The anniversary cautions us against forgetting the lessons of the

Second World War and reminds us of the catastrophic consequences of attempting to determine the fate of the world by suppressing the legitimate interests of other States and peoples. The freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly should not be used as a cover for condoning radical movements that profess a Nazi ideology and support the glorification of the Nazis and their accomplices. The persistence of such vicious instincts dictates the need for consistent efforts to place a solid barrier in the way of neo-Nazism and revanchism, strengthen inter-ethnic and intercultural accord and rally the young generation around the ideas of justice and equality. We invite everyone to take part in the nineteenth World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi in October 2017.

Hegemony has no place in the future, if we want it to be a just future that gives people the opportunity to choose their own ways of development. That entails the need to learn to respect one's partners and respect the cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world. We must therefore return to our origins — the norms and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and other instruments of the world Organization. Our commitment to that approach was reaffirmed in the Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of International Law, signed on 25 June. The observance of the principles of the sovereign equality of States and non-interference in their internal affairs should become a measure of the decency and legitimacy of any member of the world community.

We cannot address the global issues of countering international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other transboundary threats without abandoning the philosophy of exclusiveness and permissiveness. There should be no place for double standards in fighting terrorism. Truly universal joint efforts are required to create a broad counter-terrorist front, as President Putin proposed from this rostrum last year (see A/70/PV.13). The tragedies in Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Syria have proved the need to stop opportunistic attempts to use extremists as a way to advance geopolitical intentions. Before it is too late, it is necessary to think about the task of preventing the proliferation of terrorist and extremist ideology, which literally holds youth hostage in various regions of the world. We are drafting a Security Council resolution aimed at mobilizing efforts to eliminate such evils. We are looking forward to support for our initiative.

The elimination of the breeding grounds for radicalism would be facilitated significantly by resolving the conflict between Israel and Palestine. It is important to overcome the deep deadlock, which is stipulated in the 1 July 2016 report of the Quartet of Middle East facilitators. We call for the implementation of its recommendations.

We are also seriously concerned about non-proliferation and arms control. There have been attempts to replace the key objectives of maintaining strategic stability in all its components with populist slogans of "nuclear zero". We see a number of countries possessing nuclear arsenals not participating in the existing treaties. The fundamental Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is being put to a serious test. Its parties find it more difficult to speak a common language, especially in a situation when certain nuclear Powers torpedo any compromises regarding the start of the negotiations on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East.

Russia has consistently supported the liberation of humankind from the threat of nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction. However, progress towards nuclear disarmament must be made in the context of the full consideration of a whole set of factors that affect strategic stability, including the impact of unilateral global missile defence systems, the development of strategic non-nuclear strike weapons, the threat of the placement of weapons in outer space, the inability to ensure the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and the growing imbalance in conventional arms in Europe.

We note the growing support for our initiative to draft an international convention for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism. The start of serious negotiations on that issue and on the Russia-China draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space would help break the impasse in the key body of the United Nations multilateral disarmament architecture: the Conference on Disarmament. We call for substantial examination of our proposals to improve the Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons.

NATO member countries brought conventional arms control in Europe to a deep deadlock. Our attempts to save it have faced a tough ideology-driven counteraction. All ideas to return to that issue would

be meaningful only if NATO countries recognized the absolute futility of ultimatums aimed at achieving unilateral advantages. We continue to be open to an equitable and mutually respectful dialogue with NATO, including through the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

It is necessary to work towards strengthening stability and equal and indivisible security in other parts of the world, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. The recent actions of North Korea, which violate Security Council resolutions, must be stopped. We call on Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear-missile programmes and return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons regime. However, it is inadmissible to use that situation as a pretext for a massive militarization of North-East Asia and a deployment of another set of United States global missile-defence systems. All sides must refrain from the further escalation of tension and embark on the way toward a political and diplomatic settlement of the nuclear problem on the Korean peninsula through the resumption of the talks.

We will continue the dialogue within the framework of the East Asia Summits on the establishment of regional security and cooperation architecture in the Asia-Pacific region based on non-bloc foundations. A number of participating countries, including Russia, India, China and Indonesia, have submitted their views on that topic.

We invite the countries of the region to agree on the ways to implement the initiative presented by President Putin to establish an extended Eurasia Partnership with the participation of the Eurasian Economic Union countries and other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other interested States. I would like to underline that the aforementioned initiative is open and fully in line with the earlier plans to create a trade bloc between Russia and the European Union and is founded on the basis of World Trade Organization norms and principles, unlike other projects involving close trade blocs that undermine the unity of global trade systems.

We will continue to promote the unification agenda in various international forums — the United Nations, the forum of the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa group, the SCO, and the Group of 20 (G-20). The recent summit in Hangzhou reaffirmed the status of the G-20 as a leading global economic and financial forum. We thank the Chinese chairmanship for its efforts to use that representative platform effectively for the exchange of views on the key issues of the global economy and on policies for the subsequent promotion of such agreements in the universal format of the United Nations.

The signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has become an important event among United Nations activities. The communication of nationally determined contributions on a voluntary basis moves us toward achieving the objectives of the Agreement, namely, to hold the increase in the average global temperature to below 2°C. Clear rules and procedures to implement the provisions of the Paris Agreement, bearing in mind the interests of all countries participating in the process, should be developed in order to achieve success.

In that context, the launch of market and non-market mechanisms to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, as stipulated in article VI of the Agreement, is a priority matter. In the final analysis, that would be of crucial importance in preventing violations of the competitive environment and the transfer of polluting industries and dirty production from one country to another, which hampers the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The United Nations was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and develop equitable international cooperation. Today, that covers all areas of international life, including communication, political and military aspects of security, climate protection, conflict settlement, peacekeeping, ensuring human rights and freedoms, sustainable development, regulating information technology, and efforts to combat terrorism, drug-trafficking and corruption. Furthermore, it includes issues ranging from the eradication of infectious diseases to ensuring the social responsibility of businesses and fostering scientific and technological progress.

In addition, of course, the United Nations must promote civil dialogue, thereby strengthening pluralism, cultures and traditions and serving as a catalyst for progress in science and the arts. In essence, we are talking about preserving humanity in all of its riches and diversity. That goal should constitute the basis for our collective efforts. It should become an imperative

for global development and an incentive for improving global governance and the true democratization of international relations.

I would like to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has made enormous efforts, in his position as Secretary-General, to renew the United Nations through timely actions. We believe that the new Secretary-General will also make a valuable contribution.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Edward Nalbandian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Nalbandian (Armenia) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly at this session, and to wish him complete success. I thank his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, and take this opportunity to express our high appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his able leadership.

Two days ago, Armenia celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its independence. During that short period of time, much has been done to strengthen democratic institutions, the rule of law and good governance, to protect human rights and to advance economic reforms. We have been able to achieve significant progress also with regard to the socioeconomic development agenda.

However, challenges still remain. The needs of the socially most vulnerable groups have been placed at the centre of Armenia's forward-looking development strategy for 2014-2025. Likewise, our Government has launched a national plan of action on the protection of human rights. In that respect, Armenia continues to work actively with all United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the special procedures and the treaty bodies.

Our new constitutional reform followed an inclusive process of broad public discussions aimed at implementing a new and improved governance system with increased transparency and accountability. It was approved in a nationwide referendum last December and welcomed by relevant international bodies.

(*spoke in English*)

The United Nations has a considerable role to play in changing the environment, which has been conducive to intolerance, racial discrimination, xenophobia, violent extremism and terrorism. On numerous occasions Armenia has condemned the crimes committed by Da'esh and other terrorist groups that threaten the peoples of the region and beyond. The war in Syria has had a devastating impact on its civilian population, including national and religious minorities who face existential threats in the form of identity-based crimes. The violence has not bypassed Syrian-Armenians, many of whom have lost their lives. Armenian settlements, churches, schools and cultural institutions have been destroyed.

One hundred years ago, Armenian refugees found shelter in many Arab countries after the Armenian genocide. Today, thousands of Armenians, together with other peoples of the Middle East, have again been forced to flee their homes. From Syria, more than 20,000 have found refuge in Armenia. We know, therefore, what it means to be a refugee and to host refugees. The Government of Armenia has undertaken considerable efforts to assist the refugees and facilitate their integration.

We believe that wider international cooperation is needed to adequately address the challenges posed by the massive displacements. The full implementation of the commitments made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), adopted a few days ago by the Assembly, stands as an important milestone in that regard.

We would like to stress the significance of addressing the root causes of large movements of people by working for the prevention of crimes against humanity and for the peaceful settlement of disputes and lasting political solutions. Armenia has been continuously supporting and contributing to the elaboration of prevention mechanisms, in particular by regularly initiating resolutions on the prevention of genocide in the Human Rights Council.

As a nation that experienced the first genocide of the twentieth century and continues to face the denial of that horror, Armenia reaffirms its strong support for the fight against impunity for genocide. The year 2016 marks the first anniversary of resolution 69/323, initiated by Armenia, proclaiming 9 December as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime.

As the threat of violence continues to spread in various parts of the world, it is crucial to make our joint efforts to achieve peace and security more effective.

Based on that understanding, Armenia has participated in a number of United Nations actions and United Nations-mandated peace operations, thus actively contributing in the most direct way to the building of international peace and security. As the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations noted recently, "Armenia's support is important not only for its contribution but also for Armenian history and the challenges overcome during it". Indeed, history teaches us that the security of one is closely connected to that of others.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenants on Human Rights, as well as the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development. The latter affirms

> "the right of peoples to self-determination, by virtue of which they have the right freely to determine their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (*resolution 41/128, annex, sixth preambular paragraph*).

It is well known that the Charter of the United Nations underlines respect for the principles of the equal rights and the self-determination of peoples as a purpose of the Organization.

Aggressive military responses on the part of States to the peaceful aspirations of people to exercise their right to self-determination only legitimize such aspirations and deprives the aggressor of any claim to authority over the people. The Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order rightly pointed out that self-determination should not be viewed as a source of conflict, but rather that conflict is a consequence of the violation of the right to self-determination.

Azerbaijan stubbornly refuses to recognize the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination. As part of Azerbaijan's policy of ethnic cleansing and aggression, starting in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Armenians have been massacred and expelled from their homes. Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov called those actions a threat of a new genocide against the Armenian people.

This year again, in early April, in blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement, Azerbaijan unleashed another large-scale aggression against Nagorno Karabakh, indiscriminately targeting civilian infrastructure and the population. Among the victims were a 12-year-old boy and 92-year-old woman. Three captured soldiers of the Nagorno Karabakh armed forces were beheaded in Da'esh style, which was subsequently shown in towns and villages and publicized through the social media. Furthermore, the leader of Azerbaijan publicly decorated the perpetrators of that crime. During the exchange of the bodies of the deceased between Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan, which was mediated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, it was registered that the corpses transferred from the Azerbaijani side bore undeniable signs of torture and were mutilated. Such despicable atrocities go beyond the basic norms of the civilized world and constitute gross violations of international humanitarian law.

The aggression in April severely undermined the peace process. To restore trust and work for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, measures should be taken to prevent the use of force and to create conditions conducive to the advancement of the peace process. That was the main aim of two summit meetings on Nagorno Karabakh, held in Vienna in May and St. Petersburg in June. It is imperative to implement what was particularly emphasized and agreed upon at those meetings: first, the full adherence to the 1994 and 1995 trilateral ceasefire agreements, which do not have time limitations; secondly, the creation of a mechanism to investigate ceasefire violations; thirdly, the expansion of the capacity of the Personal Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office. Against all odds the people of Nagorno Karabakh have been able to defend themselves and create a free and democratic society.

Armenia, together with the mediator countries — Russia, the United States and France, which are the co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group — will continue its efforts towards an exclusively peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The co-Chairs have proposed a rather civilized formula for the settlement — ballots instead of bullets. The proposal outlined by the Presidents of the co-Chair countries stipulates the future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno Karabakh through a legally binding expression of the will of its population. The mentality that supports medieval barbarism, as witnessed in April, has difficulty accepting the civilized approaches of the modern world.

Armenia welcomes the integration of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing

Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an important step to promote sustainable and inclusive development. The Government of Armenia has adopted a national strategy to ensure the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and make it a mainstream part of our policies.

We deplore policies that stipulate unilateral economic measures as an instrument of political pressure. Agenda 2030 reconfirms, once again, that such measures are detrimental to sustainable development. The unilateral land blockade of Armenia by Turkey is a gross violation of international law. It continues to severely hamper regional transit communication routes, economic cooperation and integration.

Armenia welcomes the central role of the United Nations in the implementation of the comprehensive new 2030 Agenda. We do not underestimate the challenges facing all of us, and similarly, we should not downplay the opportunities. With the more than seven decades of the United Nations existence, we must show the same insight and vision to safeguard the future of the Organization and ensure the best possible future for the peoples of the United Nations. Armenia is fully committed to those goals.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Steinmeier (Germany) *(spoke in German; interpretation provided by delegation)*: For far too many people, the world has become an unsafe place. The challenges confronting us seem immense, and at times it seems all but hopeless to find solutions to the many conflicts around us. However, all of us here, as politicians, have a choice. The choice is between resignation and engagement in those crises, between isolation and multilateral cooperation, and between national navel-gazing and shared responsibility for one another.

We have the choice. Do we relinquish the civilizational progress achieved by the founding generation of the United Nations after experiencing two world wars and turn back to the nineteenth century? Do we return to the era of fragile, purpose-oriented power alliances and power struggles among nation States? Or do we move forward and work together to master the challenges of the twenty-first century, whether they be migration, climate change or terrorism?

In light of the dramatic meetings on Syria this week, I would like to add that we can also choose whether to put our faith in the power of diplomacy, or to shrug our shoulders in resignation at the many conflicts around us — Syria, Libya, Yemen and eastern Ukraine. Do we give up and allow those conflicts to escalate even further? Or do we live up to our responsibility and continue working on solutions despite all the setbacks? We have the choice.

In Europe, too, we are faced with a choice, now that the United Kingdom has made its choice and has opted to leave the European Union. Do we now fight to hold Europe together? Or do we allow that wonderful peace and social project to fall apart again, or even allow populists to drive us apart? We have the choice.

In Asia, too, where new Powers are jostling for influence, there is also a choice. Do they believe that their future will depend solely on their own strength? Or does the key to a bright future and cooperative security lie in their involvement in the international order? Our Asian partners have the choice.

The United States is also faced with a choice, in six weeks' time. There, too, the choice is about a supposedly possible withdrawal from a crisis-ridden world, which some are calling for, or cooperation with international partners to solve the world's problems. That choice is important for all of us. The choice before us is withdrawal, resignation and going it alone, or shared responsibility for a better future.

Whether we succeed in finding durable solutions to the major pressing challenges we face depends on the decision we make on that choice. I am talking in particular now about the Syrian crisis and the issue of refugees and migration. However, far beyond acute crisis management, that also presents us with a choice on which direction our world takes, and in what kind of international order we will live together in the future.

The objective and focus of German foreign policy are clear — we want to shape a just and peaceful world, and we want to shape it together with all partners who share that goal. The United Nations is and will remain our central forum for that. In the context of all the crisis meetings, it gives me hope that we, here in the United Nations, have made an important choice about the direction we want to take, that is, the right choice.

Our choice has also been for unity, sustainability and transformation with the document that we adopted

last year, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda is a global compact on the world's future, the focal point, the point of convergence for our joint actions. Our policies should be based on human rights, the rule of law and the fight against poverty and discrimination. We will also put global justice on the agenda of the Group of 20 when we assume the chairmanship in 2017.

I wish to express our thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who initiated the 2030 Agenda. We would also like to thank him for his commitment to the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which the German Parliament ratified earlier this week. Where if not here, at the United Nations, could we demonstrate that, solely through cooperation, we can move forward towards justice and sustainability, towards peace and security. The Charter of the United Nations and international law provide the foundation for that.

North Korea has, in a blatant manner, repeatedly violated central principles of international law. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest nuclear test carried out by North Korea. We cannot accept any country jeopardizing security in that region.

The United Nations provides the tools we need for our work here in New York and in crisis-stricken regions. In Libya and Yemen, we are supporting the tireless efforts of the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General to find political solutions. In Syria, it is clear that without the dedicated work of the United Nations and its experts, there would be even more suffering today and there would be even less hope for a solution. The hope raised a week ago by the ceasefire has again vanished, following the deadly, cynical and despicable attack on humanitarian aid workers a few days ago.

Today the situation could not be more serious. We are again faced with the choice. Will we succeed in taking the first step towards a ceasefire, which would finally make humanitarian access possible so that people can receive what they need to survive? To that end, I have proposed an agreement on banning military flights during a period of several days. Al-Assad's Air Force must cease its attacks. I believe that Moscow also has a responsibility to help bring that about. If we do not succeed, then all efforts to find a political solution to Syria will be lost in a hail of bombs. For that reason alone, although unsuccessful yesterday, our efforts in the International Syria Support Group for a ceasefire must continue.

While the international community works hard in New York to bring about a ceasefire, Al-Assad continues to bomb Aleppo to bits, which again demonstrates that the Al-Assad regime cannot and must not be allowed to determine Syria's future. However, we also cannot allow the conflict to be used by nearby or distant Powers to redraw the political and ethnic map of the Middle East. Syria's external borders must remain, and we should not allow new internal borders to be defined. The parties in the country and the region can, and indeed should, declare their legitimate interests. However, a fair balance of those interests must be found. Insisting on one of the many absolute truths will not bring peace any closer. I reiterate and want to be quite clear: there will be no winners in that war.

In the face of such suffering, we have an obligation to try right now to alleviate the plight of the Syrian people. Currently, Germany is one of the biggest donors of humanitarian aid. To date, we have made available approximately $2.5 billion for Syria and its neighbours. We have been particularly active in helping to stabilize areas in Iraq that have been liberated from the Islamic State. In Tikrit, we joined forces with United Nations agencies to rebuild schools and wells, so that as many as 90 per cent of those who have fled could return. In Ramadi, we are concentrating on unexploded mine clearance. In the case of Mosul, we are currently preparing to help local forces to begin rebuilding the city, which we hope will be liberated soon. At the same time, we are promoting access to education and the labour market in the countries neighbouring Syria — Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon — so that the people can have a future in their own region.

In 2015 in Germany, we welcomed and gave shelter to more than 1 million people. We have begun training refugees so that they acquire the skills needed to rebuild their cities. The objective is to ensure that the belief in a future at home does not remain a mere hope but can become a reality.

Our response to refugee movements and migration must be a joint, global task in full awareness of the future. Clearly, the challenge will become even bigger if conflicts, hardship and poverty persist. That is why we must tackle the root causes together. Moreover, we must improve the architectural framework of international efforts designed to deal with refugee movements and migration. As co-Chair, along with Morocco, of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, we want to play our part during the next two years. Through

the Berlin Round Table on Refugees and Migration, we are focusing on improving the structures of humanitarian assistance.

The General Assembly's high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, held on 19 September, took important decisions on still more joint actions. We wish to convey our thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and United States President Barack Obama for hosting the 20 September Leaders' Summit on Refugees, alongside co-hosts Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, Jordan, Mexico and Sweden.

We also need to revitalize engagement and cooperation in Europe as well. New rifts have emerged on our continent following Russia's annexation of Crimea, in violation of international law and the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The security situation has changed, and we need to react. First, we need to strengthen our readiness to defend ourselves. At the same time, we must also be engaged. Together with France, Russia and Ukraine, we have been working tirelessly in the Normandy format on a political solution to the Ukraine conflict. Progress has finally been achieved with the Trilateral Contact Group's framework resolution on the disengagement of forces, which was ratified this week. A ceasefire is not all that is needed for the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, but we cannot make any political headway if the weapons are not silenced.

However, there is much more at stake. We must be aware that genuine and lasting security in Europe can only take the form of cooperative security. That is why, as I have proposed, we must pay more attention to arms control in Europe. Such efforts are not meant to substitute for obligations not yet met. Rather, I have in mind new challenges, new technologies and new threats, many of which have not even been mentioned in existing documents. Our goal is to enable security for everyone.

As we seek to strengthen the dialogue between East and West, especially in these difficult times, we have assumed the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) this year. It is, by the way, the sole organization in which East and West continue to work together on a regular basis. We need the United Nations, as well as regional institutions such as the African Union and the OSCE, in order to ensure that diverging interests and differences of opinion do not turn into lasting alienation, thereby preparing the ground for even more new conflicts.

Our own history reminds us Germans that we must do everything we can to overcome the rifts in Europe. When Willy Brandt, then Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, spoke in the General Assembly on 26 September 1973, after the flags of the two parts of Germany had been hoisted in front of this building, he said:

> "In a world in which we are all increasingly dependent on each other, a policy for peace must not stop at our own doorstep." (*A/PV.2128, para. 33*)

This is all the more true today in our interconnected world than it was back then. And it is all the more true for a large and prosperous country that our partners, rightly, perceive should play a role commensurate to its size and capabilities. It is for that reason that Germany is applying for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2019-2020 term. Peace, justice, innovation and partnership — those are our goals. They are the leitmotif of our candidature, and we will be guided by them.

Despite crises and conflicts, I still firmly believe that the future lies in our hands. We will make the world a better place if we assume responsibility together — not against but with one another and, above all, if we work for those who follow us as the next generation. We have the choice. But we have to decide!

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ri Yong Ho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Yong Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean. English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, allow me to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I hope that his able stewardship will lead this session to a successful outcome. I also hope that this session, under the theme "Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", will make a meaningful contribution to promoting the peaceful development and prosperity of all countries.

Peace and security are the permanent themes of the United Nations. The Sustainable Development Goals presuppose peace and security. Even at this very moment, when the United Nations aspires to a

transformation through sustainable development, the world is besieged with the wild wind of terrorism, an unprecedented war-driven refugee crisis and an increasing number of global hot spots.

The Korean peninsula has now been turned into the world's most dangerous hot spot and could even ignite a nuclear war. A peaceful environment is the foremost prerequisite for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has embarked on the implementation of its national five-year economic development strategy to re-energize the overall economy and lay the foundation for its sustainable development.

As the international community witnesses every year, the Korean peninsula is often engulfed in a situation that can spiral out of control. Its root cause lies squarely with the United States of America, which refuses to abandon its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but instead holds aggressive war exercises, one after another, in and around the Korean peninsula. The large-scale joint military exercises conducted by the United States in March and April and in August and September this year were extremely provocative and massive military manoeuvres. They involved over 500,000 troops and strategic assets that included strategic nuclear bombers and strategic nuclear submarines. Their scale is more than large enough to wage an all-out war.

Such nuclear war exercises are extremely offensive and aggressive, as they mainly include high-precision strikes, commando infiltration, landing and pre-emptive nuclear strikes aimed at the decapitation of the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the occupation of Pyongyang. Nowhere in the world today are such large-scale joint military exercises as those around the Korean peninsula conducted, nor do war games of such a provocative and offensive nature take place. Never have such undisguised military threats and extremely dangerous and aggressive exercises occurred right under the nose of an adversary.

No proper institutional peace mechanism has been established on the Korean peninsula. The war of the 1950s has not ended, but a temporary armistice remains in force. That means that neither side feels the need to make a declaration of war if it wants to begin fighting again. It is a place where provocative military acts such as large-scale joint military exercises can easily infuriate the other side, provoking a response.

Any incident could easily lead to a conflict and escalate into all-out war. Concerns are increasingly being voiced about the aggravation of tensions by these large-scale joint military exercises. We hear concerns being expressed in neighbouring countries, many countries of the region and even the United States of America and South Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has made every possible effort to prevent an armed conflict and its escalation, while taking the necessary self-defensive countermeasures, whenever the United States and South Korea conduct provocative, aggressive joint military exercises.

The respected leader Comrade Kim Jong Un, Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea and Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, noted at the seventh Congress of the Party that the United States should abandon its anachronistic hostile policy towards our country, replace the Korean Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement and withdraw its armed forces and war equipment from South Korea. He also clarified that dialogue and negotiations were needed, above all, between the military authorities of North and South Korea so as to ensure peace on the Korean peninsula and achieve national reunification. But there has been no positive response, and the large-scale joint military exercises targeting the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have continued. And they are becoming more and more provocative and aggressive.

Currently on the international scene, the fundamental, widely recognized principles of international relations are being openly ignored by the United States-led imperialist forces in their outrageous schemes for domination and intervention, while justice is being criminalized and transformed into injustice, depending on the interests of the imperialist Powers.

To safeguard international peace and security and achieve sustainable development, genuine international justice must be realized without fail. Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations refers to bringing about

> "by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

However, when the Security Council deals with the issue of the Korean peninsula, it now covers up the high-handedness and arbitrariness of the United States

of America in the name of the United Nations, ignoring justice and international law.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in accordance with Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter, has on several occasions requested the Security Council to hold an emergency meeting on the threat to international peace and security posed by the large-scale United States joint military exercises on the Korean peninsula. This year alone, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made such requests to the Security Council in March and in August, but the Council rejected them every time. On the other hand, the Security Council takes issue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's rightful self-defence measures to safeguard its sovereignty, dignity and national security.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had no other choice but to go nuclear after doing everything possible to defend its national security from the constant United States nuclear threat, which has persisted since the 1950s. Our decision to strengthen our nuclear armament is a rightful self-defence measure to protect ourselves from constant United States nuclear threats. Nevertheless, the Security Council, as recently as in its resolution 2270 (2016), declared that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ongoing nuclear and ballistic missile-related activities pose a clear threat to international peace and security. That resolution is the latest fabrication against my country. As for the legal basis for the resolution, neither the Charter of the United Nations nor any other international convention has a provision stipulating that nuclear and ballistic missile activity represents a threat to international peace and security.

In practice, countries that began the same activities long before the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have never been called into question in the Security Council. One cannot help but ask on what grounds and with what authority did the Security Council adopt resolution 2270 (2016), which prohibits the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from engaging in nuclear and ballistic missile activities. If the Council has such grounds and authority, why does it not adopt resolutions against countries that conduct the same nuclear and ballistic rocket tests? We submitted an official questionnaire to the Secretariat of the United Nations in this regard, but nearly four months have elapsed and the Secretariat has not responded.

Yet, the reason is clear. It is because the Security Council is the place where guilt or innocence is decided on the basis not of justice, but of whether one has the veto power. The United States of America does not have the moral authority to force United Nations Member States to implement this kind of undeserved resolution, and Member States have no moral obligation to implement these unfair and unjust resolutions.

Last week, the 17th Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) was held on the beautiful island of Margarita in Venezuela. In the final document, the Heads of State and Government expressed concern that

> "In recent years, the Security Council has been too quick to threaten or authorize enforcement action in some cases while being silent and inactive in others".

They underlined that

> "Sanctions should be imposed only when a threat to international peace and security or an act of aggression takes place, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations."

In the Final Declaration of the Margarita Summit, the Heads of State and Government

> "expressed their condemnation at the promulgation and application of unilateral coercive measures against countries of the Movement, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, particularly the principles of non-intervention, self-determination and independence of States"

This is the common position of the NAM countries that make up nearly two thirds of the membership of the United Nations. This is the true voice of the international community. International justice never comes by itself; it can be achieved only when the voice of independent countries against imperialism grows strong.

Opting to become an armed nuclear Power is our State policy. As long as there is a nuclear-weapon State that is hostile to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, our national security and peace on the Korean peninsula can be defended only by means of a credible nuclear deterrent. The reason why we had no other option but to strengthen our nuclear deterrence unreservedly may not be easily understood by European countries, whose security awareness attenuated following the end of the Cold War 25 years ago, or by countries that have

never had the nuclear weapons of a hostile Power on their doorstep and in their air space.

The successful nuclear warhead explosion test that we conducted recently is a practical countermeasure taken in reaction to the host of threats and sanctions from hostile forces, including the United States of America, that viciously make an issue of the exercise by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its right to self-defence. The test also demonstrates our Party's and people's strongest will ever in its readiness to wage a counter-attack against provocation by enemies.

Only a couple of days ago, the United States again threatened the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by flying B-1B strategic bombers over the Military Demarcation Line on the Korean peninsula and landing in South Korea. We will never remain onlookers to such acts of provocation, and the United States will have to face inconceivable consequences. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to take measures to strengthen its national nuclear-armed forces, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in order to defend its dignity and right to existence, and to safeguard genuine peace vis-à-vis the increased threat of nuclear war by the United States.

In order to safeguard global peace and security by realizing genuine international justice, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations, the old international order, where injustice prevails under the guise of justice, must be destroyed to give way to a new international order of impartiality and justice.

The blockade unjustly imposed on Cuba by the United States of America for the past several decades is a typical example of the total absence of international justice. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes this opportunity to extend full support and solidarity to the Government and people of Cuba in their struggle to safeguard the dignity and sovereignty of the nation and realize international justice in the face of the high-handedness, arbitrariness and unilateral blockade of the United States.

International justice should be realized as soon as possible in the Palestine issue and in those countries and regions like Syria, Iraq and Libya that face the turbulence of war and violence owing to the unbridled interference of the United States in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

The covert political attempts of the United States and Western countries to infringe upon the sovereignty of independent African countries by abusing recourse to the International Criminal Court should be held in check. The double standard of the United States and its supporting Powers should be resolutely rejected; they politicize human rights issues to intentionally demonize the anti-imperialist and independent countries, and they misuse human rights as a tool of colour revolutions.

If the United Nations relinquishes justice, no country will place its hopes in the Organization. Any country that the United States regards as an antagonist and has targeted for regime change is automatically categorized as a country with human rights problems, without exception. That is the practice pursued at today's United Nations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is one such country, but that only goes to show that we are an independent country that is against the United States and its supporting Powers. The United States raises the issue of our human rights because it is at a loss in dealing with the nuclear issue. If it is at a loss again as to what human rights question to pursue, it will take up another issue to continue its attempt to stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, our people will never renounce socialism and the system of absolute service that they themselves have chosen, as a result of United States policies.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will push ahead with its vigorous struggle to remove the root cause of the threat of nuclear war imposed by the United States. This it will do by having a powerful nuclear deterrent, with a view to safeguarding peace and security on the Korean peninsula, and in Asia and the world at large, and to denuclearizing the world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary): It is an honour for me to stand here in front of such a distinguished audience, especially in 2016, the year marking the sixtieth anniversary of the 1956 uprising, when the Hungarian people rose up and fought for their freedom against the Communist oppressors. In 1956, Hungary did not receive external help and so our revolution and fight for freedom was defeated, but the heroic efforts of our freedom fighters gave us the strength to survive the dictatorship and to finally gain freedom in 1990.

So today I can stand here before everyone as a representative of a free and proud nation, a nation that is proud of its traditions, culture, Christianity and past struggles for freedom.

Obviously, at this rostrum we do not need to say that the world has experienced enormous global challenges that have recently led to dramatic changes in the tradional world order. Let me just emphasize three of the important factors responsible for those changes. All of us have witnessed, and unfortunately experienced, the worldwide spread of terrorist organizations. Day by day we witness the destabilization of some key and vulnerable regions of the world. And day by day we face the fact that around 60 to 65 million people globally are on the move, or being displaced, for various reasons.

These three factors have led to dramatic changes in the world order. I think that it is no longer an exaggeration to say that this is the twenty-fourth hour and that there is but little time left for us to channel those changes in a positive direction. However, in order to reach this goal, all of us together have to be successful in carrying out three global policy initiatives.

First of all, we must eliminate the key factor of global terrorism: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Until we finally destroy ISIS, there will be no peace or stability in Europe's southern and south-eastern neighbourhoods, namely the Middle East and North Africa. Until we finally destroy ISIS, thousands upon thousands of people will continue to be forced to leave their homes. Until we finally destroy ISIS, Christian communities will continue to be threatened and will continue to suffer heavy attacks. Until we finally destroy ISIS, migratory pressure on Europe will not decrease.

Secondly, we must eliminate the global network of human traffickers. We must destroy their business models and recognize that they have caused the deaths of thousands of innocent people. I am sure we can all agree that their crimes against humanity must not remain unpunished.

Thirdly, we must change the migration policies that inspire people to take their lives in their own hands to violate borders and to move to countries thousands of miles away. Migration is an extremely serious issue and challenge. That is why, instead of emotional debates, we need debates based on common sense and rationality. Instead of accusing and bashing each other, we must stand on the very stable basis of international law. I think it is especially pertinent to say that here, in this Hall. International law stipulates that the right to a safe life is a fundamental human right. But the option to pick which country to live in is not a fundamental human right. We must make it clear that there is no excuse for violating the border between two safe and peaceful countries.

Regarding Hungary, I am proud to report that with the policies that we have been carrying out, we were able to contribute to appropriate responses to recent global challenges.

First, Hungary is one of 23 countries that sent troops to fight ISIS. There are 143 Hungarian men and women serving in Iraq. They have been taking part in actions against ISIS as a force protection unit and as Peshmerga trainers. We have sent the Peshmerga army a significant amount of ammunition, and we have been taking part in the rehabilitation programme for wounded Peshmerga. We are also beginning to train Iraqi army officials. In that regard, I would like to mention that we urged the International Criminal Court (ICC) to start investigating crimes committed by ISIS against Christian communities. We regret and deplore that, despite letters sent to the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, no real action has been taken. We are also saddened that the Security Council was not ready to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that the Hungarian Government has established a State secretariat that monitors the position of Christian communities all over the world, determines whether they are being persecuted and organizes help for those communities whenever necessary. By doing so, we hope to prevent crimes committed against Christian communities from going unpunished.

Secondly, regarding human trafficking, the Hungarian Parliament has adopted stringent regulations against human traffickers, which can serve as best practices in the global struggle against smuggling networks.

Thirdly, regarding migration, Hungary ranks the security of its people as its top priority. We have protected our borders thus far, and we will not allow any mass border violation in future. In that connection, we must make clear that migration policies all over the world have failed. Migration policies that consider all migrants to be refugees have failed. Migration policies that seek to force countries to host thousands

of migrants against the will of their own citizens have failed. Migration policies based on accusing countries that protect their own borders have also failed.

The uncontrolled and unregulated mass migration has offered terrorist organizations the opportunity to send their fighters and their terrorists to other countries and continents. The outcome and consequence of the uncontrolled and unregulated mass migration in Europe is the growing threat of terror and the worsening of public security. It is obvious now that people in Europe expect their politicians to make the restoration of security a top European policy priority.

Our position is absolutely clear — we must help those in need. We must help people to stay as close to their homes as possible, because that will allow them to return to their homes as soon as the crises are over. That is why we, the international community, have to support Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and the Kurdish regional Government in Iraq, because those countries and the Kurdish region have been taking care of millions of refugees. If we do not help them, and if those countries and that region become unstable, then the refugees will hit the road, risking their lives trying to reach Europe. Europe will be unable to meet such a challenge. Hungary has contributed €3 million to the Madad Fund and has made a €5 million pledge to build a hospital in Syria. We have also launched a special scholarship programme for youngsters from Syria to study in Hungary, because we must help those in need.

We must place conditions on our development projects and funding programmes. I think we have a right to expect beneficiary countries to carry out reforms and to create conditions that will encourage their people to stay in their homelands. The United Nations must play a vital role in settling those serious conflicts and in overcoming those serious challenges. But, in order for it to do so, we need credibility. Hungary has joined the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group because we believe that we must improve the accountability and transparency of the United Nations.

That is particularly true as it relates to the appointment process for the Secretary-General. We would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Lykketoft, for having ushered in the new phase of appointing the Secretary-General by organizing a hearing and for increasing the Assembly's role in that process.

Finally, I would like to speak as a representative of a country from Central Europe. The Central European region must face some difficult and complicated challenges. There is a war in Ukraine that affects energy security; we have tensions in the western Balkan region; and we have to deal with the Russia/Europe relationship. The Central and Eastern European countries form a group within the United Nations from which so far no Secretary-General has been chosen during the more than 70-year history of the Organization. This time, therefore, we are appealing to the generosity of the other four country groups in urging them to appoint a Secretary-General from Central Europe, who would understand the mindset of the people of Central Europe and their region and its challenges. Such a Secretary-General could be very helpful in enabling the Central European countries to overcome some of their historical tensions and issues.

Finally, I have the honour to announce Hungary's candidature for the Human Rights Council for the 2017-2019 term. We are grateful to those countries that have already pledged to support us. I would like to emphasize here that we are ready to work together with our fellow States Members of the United Nations in order to contribute to making the United Nations human rights mechanisms more effective, with the goal of creating a better world for everyone.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): More than ever before, we share a common destiny. The destiny of everyone here is also our destiny, and we can master the challenges of the future only if we face them together. That is why we have the United Nations. That is why we meet in this Assembly.

Today, we are doing so at a time marked by the destructive forces of war and the tragic plight of refugees, such as the unspeakable horror of Syria, girls abducted and enslaved by Boko Haram, or teenagers on the run who are in search of opportunity but have never attended school. It is also marked by the return of geopolitical rivalries and isolationism. The basic tenets of our coexistence are being challenged. Acts of aggression are changing borders; nuclear weapons are proliferating and being tested; human dignity is being denied. We are being revisited by the spectres of

xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, autocracy and fear-mongering. Walls are being erected.

We must and we can respond to that by empowering people, by strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law, by celebrating diversity, by keeping our economies open and pushing for trade, so that we can create decent jobs for all, by committing to arresting climate change in order to save our planet, by setting ambitious goals for sustainable development, by pursuing peace through diplomacy, and by seeking solutions through collaboration.

High on our global agenda are the issues of migration and refugees. As we have heard so many times already this week, 65 million people are fleeing from harm. The international community must live up to its commitments by providing protection for refugees and guaranteeing the right to seek asylum. That is a global responsibility, to be shouldered cooperatively and addressed comprehensively and through shared governance. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), which the Assembly adopted earlier this week, is a first step. But there are many more to take. Fundamentally, we need to redouble resettlement efforts, which are the most important way to help refugees. And at the same time, we must harness the positive effects of safe and orderly migration.

The United Nations must adapt to a changing environment. The Organization has achieved a great deal in 71 years, but it falls short of our expectations. It is time for serious reforms that can make it fit for purpose. To succeed, we need a strong, visionary and courageous leadership, dedicated to change, to turning ambitions into concrete action and to delivering on the recent groundbreaking multilateral achievements on climate change, sustainable development and peace.

We need the States Members of the United Nations to heed and lead that call for change. The prevention of armed conflict must be at the core of our action. We should make full use of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, which remains underutilized. Early warnings should be followed by early action. Resolution 70/262, on sustaining peace, adopted by the Assembly earlier this year, provides a strong framework on which to base effective prevention and peacebuilding. Working with and through regional organizations will make the United Nations more effective in its quest to sustain peace. It is particularly important to find ways to sustainably finance regional and subregional organizations' peace operations.

Another area requiring determined action is gender equality. We call for a true shift in the way we approach global efforts aimed at achieving gender equality. Ultimately, it is our task to enhance rights, representation and resources for women and girls all around the world, by increasing women's participation in peace processes, protecting them against gender-based violence in humanitarian crises and strengthening their political and economic empowerment. The United Nations can lead the way by improving the gender balance in its system and having a gender-responsive budget of its own, and by using gender-disaggregated data when dealing with matters of peace and conflict, including in the Security Council.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a political road map for reform. It requires the United Nations to offer comprehensive advice and support to Governments on how to shape and develop societies on issues ranging from tax reform to decent jobs. It also requires the United Nations to monitor developed countries, while assisting middle-income countries in their efforts to build inclusive and accountable institutions and sustainable prosperity.

To achieve that, we must strengthen and reform the financing of the United Nations. All branches of its development system should make full use of their respective mandates and specialties, working together and avoiding duplication. Collaborative efforts should be rewarded. That is the only way that the United Nations, with its limited resources, will be able to make a greater impact at the country level and support the efforts of all Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A United Nations conference to be co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden in 2017 will focus on SDG 14, with the goal of conserving and using sustainably our oceans, seas and marine resources.

Security is something we must build together. It is something we share, and that notion compels us to contest the false logic of confrontation and geopolitical zero-sum games. Instead, it can lead us to emphasize de-escalation and disarmament, mediation and dialogue, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. That is a cornerstone of Swedish security policy. It is our basic approach to security in both our immediate and global neighbourhoods.

Indeed, the importance of cooperation increases with the transboundary nature of threats. Internal and external security are more interlinked than ever before. Therefore, we must improve our common tools for crisis management, equip the next generation of peace operations with more robust mandates and adequate resources and strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, including the European Union and the African Union.

But we cannot ignore the key to achieving peace: political will. And for peace to be sustainable, the root causes of conflict must be tackled and the rules of our multilateral world order respected. Peace accords are not implemented, and resolutions, mandates and decisions by the Security Council are disregarded. This is unacceptable. It challenges the authority of the Security Council and the rules-based international order itself.

The Middle East peace process has stalled. The parties are far apart, trust is lacking and the situation on the ground is deteriorating. The occupation must end, international law must be observed and the two-State solution must be revitalized. The Security Council has a huge responsibility. Other initiatives to revive the peace process, such as the Arab Peace Initiative and the French initiative, should be supported by all of us. Sweden is honoured to lead the work on involving civil society in the French initiative.

In Europe, Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and military presence in eastern Ukraine constitute breaches of international law and principles of the European security order agreed by all participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. All parties must do their part so that Ukraine can regain control over its internationally recognized borders.

If we want peace, we need to plan for peace and sustain peace. This is equally critical in the vulnerable aftermath of violent conflict. As more areas are liberated from Da'esh and other terrorist groups, we must take action to win peace; we must, at the very least, mitigate and stabilize the situation in liberated areas. To meet this challenge, our tools must be developed and cooperation enhanced.

The United Nations is central to political processes, the delivery of immediate relief, and efforts for long-term development, including State-building. I welcome the fact that the United Nations is now exploring responses for stabilization. Sweden believes that closer cooperation in this field between the United Nations and the European Union, politically and on the ground, would be beneficial. We should be ready to provide such comprehensive support to Iraq.

I wish to thank the General Assembly once again for electing Sweden as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2017-2018 term. We take its strong support as a vote of confidence for our foreign policy of solidarity and global commitment. We also see it as a call for a Security Council that addresses challenges to international peace and security in a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent manner. We are ready to assume our share of responsibility for the entire Council agenda.

We will bring our foreign policy perspectives with us in fulfilling this assignment — those of preventing armed conflict, sustaining peace, the necessity of including women in peace processes and an understanding of security that stresses the links to sustainable development. We will continue to talk with, not only about, countries, and we will remain true to our principles. Swedish foreign policy rests firmly on international law, respect for human rights, gender equality and a humanitarian perspective.

"Today is the last day of the war." That is what the Colombian magazine *Semana* wrote on 23 June this year. More than 50 years of conflict have passed. Hundreds of thousands have been killed. Millions were on the run. Let us pay our respects to the victims. Let us welcome the peace agreement. But let us also remember what is unique about this agreement. The architects were not only the Government and the guerrillas. Victims of the conflict, women's organizations and civil society were also involved. Peace does not come about because it is printed in a headline. It happens step by step, because of the courage of ordinary people. It happens when people organize a meeting to form a political party to voice their demands or print a pamphlet or use social media to rally for their cause. It happens when women and girls claim their human rights, when civil society and trade unions grow, making societies and economies more participatory and inclusive. Such is the fabric of lasting peace and such is the task of the United Nations.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Salaheddine Mezouar, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. Mezouar (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to express to the President and his friendly country our sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I wish him every success in leading the work at this session and in bringing about tangible results with regard to all the issues on our agenda.

I also want to take this opportunity to express to his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, our sincere gratitude for the excellent manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session. I wish to express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for all his efforts to realize the objectives of the United Nations.

This session of the General Assembly coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the Kingdom's membership in the United Nations. Over the past 60 years, Morocco has worked tirelessly with the international Organization. It is committed to its objectives of strengthening international peace and security and to delivering the possibility of development to all peoples of the world, especially in developing countries.

Joining the Organization was one of the first sovereign decisions that Morocco took after it gained its independence. It is an expression of its commitment to multilateral action as the best way to confront complicated crises and the increasing challenges throughout the world, as well as its commitment to the values of solidarity, cooperation, freedom and peace. The Kingdom of Morocco believes in the role of the United Nations as a reflection of the world's values and the principles of international legitimacy.

Ever since it joined the Organization, Morocco has worked diligently to contribute to the realization of its objectives. In that respect, Morocco sought to adopt a dynamic approach by realigning its national priorities with those of the United Nations.

Peacemaking is a cornerstone of the activities of the United Nations, as reflected in its history of peaceful settlement of international and regional conflicts and in its respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and territorial unity of States, in accordance with the principles of the Organization. As a committed partner in United Nations peacekeeping operations since the 1960s, the Kingdom of Morocco has sought to contribute substantially and continuously as a demonstration of its belief in collective security and the crucial role that the United Nations plays in that regard. Morocco has participated in peacekeeping operations in Africa, America and Asia and has contributed more than 100,000 peacekeepers. Today, it is contributing more than 1,600 Blue Helmets to peacekeeping operations in Africa.

It is incumbent on the international community to work for international peace and security, especially in Africa, given the connection between economic and social progress and political stability. There can be no development without peace and security and no stability without comprehensive, sustainable development. Under the wise leadership of his Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom of Morocco will spare no effort to strengthen United Nations initiatives to promote good governance and contain conflicts related to the territorial integrity of countries. To that end, since January 2014 Morocco has chaired the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Ever since it became a Member of the United Nations, the Kingdom of Morocco has sought to establish relations of solidarity among members of the international community both by encouraging the constructive North-South partnership and by strengthening South-South cooperation. These are strategic priorities designed to realize sustainable development for the benefit of all peoples of the world. To put the issue of sustainable development at the centre of the work of the international community, the Kingdom seeks to develop genuine partnerships in order to bring about sustainable human development through solidarity.

In that connection, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015 (resolution 70/1), is a political commitment through which we have agreed on common ground in our efforts to fulfil the aspirations of people in developing nations to live in dignity. The Kingdom of Morocco emphasizes the importance of providing financing for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. All should do their part to implement the Agenda in an effective and appropriate manner.

The United Nations must align its work with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while Member States must adopt the necessary measures and policies to implement the Goals, and

various forms of financing should be provided to ensure that the Goals are achieved by 2030.

As part of the effort to strengthen development at the national level, the National Initiative for Human Development, which was launched by His Majesty King Mohammed VI in May 2005, is one of the basic pillars of Morocco's programme. It is human-centred and takes a comprehensive approach to development in that it includes political, economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions. It has been successful in reducing poverty, vulnerability and marginalization, in developing infrastructure, and in providing health-care services.

The Kingdom of Morocco has strengthened its solidarity with African countries as a centrepiece of its foreign policy. It has sought to defend the interests of the continent and to help it to promote development and combat poverty. It has shared with a number of African countries its experience in the field of social services, including in the areas of education, training, water, agriculture, food security, electricity and health care. In this respect, the Kingdom of Morocco renews its call on the United Nations and regional and international financial institutions to develop a plan for economic transformation in Africa and to provide resources to finance it.

Given the link between sustainable development and the environment, Morocco, which will host the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Marrakesh in November, aspires to make the session an opportunity for African voices and those of other parts of the world that are vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change to be heard on an equal basis. It emphasizes its intention to make the Marrakesh session a turning point in the implementation of the Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change by facilitating solutions for sustainable development, as well as practical measures and structural programmes to implement the global commitments to address climate change.

Morocco wishes to emphasize that the success of the implementation of the Paris Agreement is organically and strongly linked to the provision of the necessary financial resources. We must promote access to financing. In that connection, the Kingdom of Morocco hopes that the Conference participants in Marrakesh will give special attention to the interests of the countries of the South, including African countries and small island developing States, that are threatened by climate change.

At this time, Morocco, which has deposited its instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement, calls on all other States to expedite their ratification of the Agreement so that it can enter into force as a strong expression of the commitment of the international community. Morocco seeks to include all stakeholders in the Marrakesh session so that it will reflect our solidarity and commitment to safeguarding the future of present and future generations.

The Kingdom of Morocco has placed the continent of Africa at the heart of its foreign policy and will continue to make every effort to promote Africa's economic development. With a clear vision of the future based on an understanding of the continent's problems, His Majesty King Mohammed VI is leading the process of peace and development on the continent and launching initiatives and visiting several African countries in order to strengthen the ties of fraternity, cooperation and solidarity among the African people. During his most recent speech, on 20 August, His Majesty stressed the strong link between Morocco and Africa.He said:,

> "Africa, for us, is not a target. It is a commitment, because African people are Africans regardless of where they are and because the interests of Morocco are part of those of Africa. Our destinies will always be intertwined. In our view, we will either achieve progress and stability together or not at all. Africa is more than a geographical or historical connection. It is a commitment based on love and respect, human relations and a deep-seated interest."

Morocco's decision to return to its natural place within the African Union is a firm expression of its commitment to Africa and reflects its interests. On this occasion, I wish to express our deep gratitude to the majority of African countries for calling on Morocco to return to its African context. Aware of its leading role in Africa, Morocco has responded to their call and will continue defending African interests at all levels.

Sixty years after joining our strong Organization, I underscore our belief in the role of regional economic groups. Morocco has sought to strengthen good-neighbourly relations in the African, Maghreb and Mediterranean contexts. His Majesty continues to call

for a new regime in the Maghreb with influence at the regional and international levels, a regime that will guarantee peace and stability in the region, based on respect for member States and their territorial integrity.

Morocco gave earnest and responsible thought to the Security Council's calls for a lasting political solution through negotiation in the regional conflict over Western Sahara and responded by putting forward a self-rule initiative that reflected several Security Council resolutions as the basis for a solution. The Council's most recent resolution on the issue, resolution 2285 (2016), emphasizes once again the basic aspects of a political solution to this conflict, calls on all parties to be realistic and seek consensus, and appeals to all parties and neighbouring States to seek a political solution through dialogue.

Morocco reaffirms its intention to continue working sincerely with the United Nations to find a political solution through negotiations that will maintain the unity of the Kingdom of Morocco, enable the people of its southern region to manage their affairs in the context of democracy, stability and comprehensive development, and protect the northern part of the continent from the dangers of separatism, Balkanization, terrorism and extremism.

The sixtieth anniversary of Morocco's joining the United Nations is a good occasion to reaffirm Morocco's unwavering commitment to protecting human rights and defending fundamental freedoms as part of its efforts to uphold human dignity within a united and democratic community. Morocco has initiated many reforms and has realized many achievements designed to strength human rights, especially in relation to women, children and young people. It has expanded individual freedoms through an approach that puts human rights at the centre of human development. Morocco is working assiduously to integrate its comprehensive vision in all international forums and is playing a leading role in developing the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, including the universal periodic review, which Morocco was instrumental in developing.

The Kingdom has taken several initiatives with its partners in the Council to strengthen the United Nations human rights system. It also hosted the second World Human Rights Forum, in 2014, thereby adding an international dimension to the Kingdom's achievements. Morocco will spare no effort to make the noble principles of human rights a means to create friendship among nations and respect for the international community's diversity and to strengthen the essential values of human rights free from politicization.

The Kingdom of Morocco, as an active Member of the United Nations, has adopted a clear and firm position with regard to international efforts to combat international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Kingdom has endeavoured earnestly, through bilateral and multilateral cooperation efforts at the regional and international levels, to combat the phenomenon of terrorism. It reaffirms its commitment to scrupulously respecting its obligation to ensure that no terrorist activity is launched from Moroccan territory.

Last April, Morocco was among the first countries to submit a national report on the implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 2253 (2015) with regard to combating terrorism and suppressing its sources of financing. The report was very comprehensive and addressed in detail all the measures that Morocco has taken to implement its obligations in accordance with the resolution's provisions. At the national level, Morocco has adopted a sound and clear-cut policy to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations through a comprehensive and multidisciplinary strategy, which is closely aligned with that of the United Nations. It is based on a religious, social, legal and security approach.

In that connection, Morocco has launched a number of initiatives, including a joint initiative with the Netherlands in the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, to combat foreign terrorist fighters. Morocco and the Netherlands, through their joint chairmanship, want to expand the Forum at the regional and international levels and to strengthen related efforts at the international level. Morocco has also established the Group of Friends Against Terrorism at the United Nations, the purpose of which is to coordinate and harmonize the various voluntary initiatives.

At the regional level, Morocco has drawn on its experience in undertaking religious efforts to combat terrorism at the service of fraternal and friendly countries that wish to provide religious training to their imams to promote respect for the principles of peaceful coexistence and tolerance. In a letter addressing the growing ignorance of many about religion, His Majesty said that all people — Muslims, Christians and Jews — should stand as one in facing all forms

of terrorism, extremism and hatred. The history of humankind shows that progress cannot be achieved in a society that is suffering from xenophobia and extremism, because those factors lead to a lack of security and stability.

The Kingdom of Morocco firmly believes that the United Nations must be the lead Organization in the fight against terrorism. It emphasizes its readiness to share its experiences and good practices with its partners. Morocco is open to considering any initiative that seeks to combat this phenomenon, bearing in mind that suppressing terrorism is a joint responsibility shared by all Member States of the United Nations. A global commitment and the adoption of a cooperative approach based on bilateral and regional solidarity are needed to implement the provisions of counter-terrorism agreements.

With the same commitment, Morocco pursues its efforts in the field of mediation for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Accordingly, the Kingdom hosted a meeting of the Libyan parties, convened under the auspices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, which culminated in the signing the Skhirat Political Agreement. The Kingdom, which supports the search for a political solution to the Libyan problem through negotiations, stresses that an end must be put to the bloodshed of innocents and that the unity of Libya must be maintained. We call here on all Libyan political stakeholders to pursue dialogue and to fully implement the Skhirat Agreement without excluding any party. That will enable the Libyan people to realize their aspirations to stability, national unity and sustainable development in an atmosphere of freedom, dignity and democracy, devoid of extremism and terrorism.

Morocco will spare no effort in its efforts to achieve peace and stability in the Sahel and Sahara regions. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2012 and 2013, it played a role, through the Council, in developing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which seeks to strengthen good governance, security and development in the region.

The Kingdom of Morocco considers the Palestinian issue to be a crucial problem in the Middle East and is convinced that this sensitive region cannot enjoy a just and lasting peace as long as the Palestinian people are not able to exercise their alienable right to establish an independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Morocco expresses its concern over the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are not advancing as they should. It calls on the international community to work more effectively and tenaciously to create the necessary conditions for a resumption of direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel within a specific time frame. The revival of the peace process must be based on solid ground, in accordance with the principles of international legitimacy and previous agreements, such as the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, in order to ensure the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Kingdom of Morocco will remain committed to the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question by supporting constructive initiatives that would ensure the necessary conditions to realize a two-State solution, including the French initiative, which involves comprehensive international and Egyptian efforts with a regional impact. Morocco calls on Palestine and Israel to resume negotiations.

The troubling developments affecting the Holy City of Jerusalem, including human rights violations, continued settlement and forced displacement in an effort to change the legal and demographic composition of the city, represent grave violations of international law and international agreements. There must be an immediate intervention to put an end to them. His Majesty the King, as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, has called the attention of the international community to the dangers and threats of Israel's pursuit of its plans to change the legal, demographic and religious character of Jerusalem. He urges the leading Powers to ensure that Jerusalem remains a symbol of peaceful coexistence among all monotheistic religions.

After 70 years of the existence of our international Organization, today more than ever we need a strong, renewed and effective United Nations. We must therefore reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Organization and to mobilizing our capacities to reform and strengthen it. The Organization is the most effective multilateral forum for seeking solutions to contemporary problems and for bringing about a just international system that will ensure peace and stability for present and future generations.

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.